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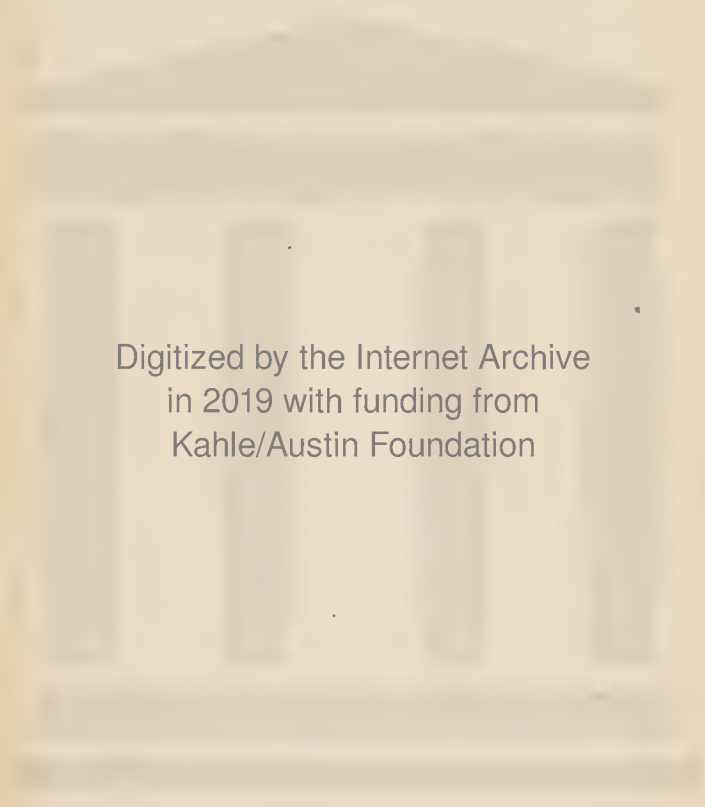
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SELF-SELECTED  
ESSAYS



UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

FROM FIJI TO THE CANNIBAL ISLANDS.	<i>Beatrice Grimshaw.</i>
FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW.	<i>A. C. Benson.</i>
A LODGE IN THE WILDERNESS.	<i>John Buchan.</i>
WILD ANIMALS I HAVE KNOWN.	<i>Thompson Seton.</i>
THE LAND OF FOOTPRINTS.	<i>Stewart E. White.</i>
THE PATH TO ROME.	<i>Hilaire Belloc.</i>
THE GREAT BOER WAR.	<i>A. Conan Doyle.</i>
A MODERN UTOPIA.	<i>H. G. Wells.</i>
WILD LIFE IN A SOUTHERN COUNTY.	<i>Richard Jefferies.</i>

# SELF-SELECTED ESSAYS

A SECOND SERIES

BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

LOCKE—

"I am not to answer for Malebranche, but for myself. I make use of Authors only as they come into my subject, but I never go out of my way to bring them in."

MONTAIGNE—

"I won't dispute that; but in my opinion you write best when you steal most."

Dialogue between Locke and Montaigne,  
by Matthew Prior.

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## P R E F A C E.

A FEW years ago my friend Mr. John Buchan was at the pains to make a selection from my Essays for the Nelson Series. I am sure he made as good a job of it as possible. At all events no complaints have reached my ears, though to be sure, in such a matter as a selection, the world is very easily content. Not so the author who has been thus treated. He, when he turns the pages of the truncated thing, though fully alive to the fact (else were he a fool, an unbearable hypothesis) that selection involves omission, and that consequently omissions there *must* be, is yet uneasy as he reads. Everywhere discrimination is decerned, as against himself; discrimination with its consequent rejection; nor can he take pleasure in the thought of his trifles "light as air" being weighed in the critical scales, one against another.

I once lived in close friendship with a poet, long since lost "in death's dateless night"; elegant, refined, ironical, who though his poetical output, all told, was of the tiniest dimensions, yet took it into

his head one day that he would like to see it cut down by just one-half—for no more than this, so he thought, would the world, ever impatient (as was he) of bulk, willingly let live. In pursuance of this design he entrusted the task of selection to a friend, also a poet, and of a kindred though more productive genius than his own, who at once, and for love's sake, undertook the Lilliputian task, and was able, in an amazingly short time, to produce the minutest of volumes. The poets exchanged thanks and compliments, and one of them supposed the incident was over. Barely a fortnight, however, had elapsed when there coyly appeared in the shops, by the side of the new-comer, a twin volume containing *all* the poems the friendly critic had omitted.

This second and self-selected selection contains nothing that is not at least ten years old ; and half the “pieces” were not before Mr. Buchan when he made his choice.

A. B.

SHERINGHAM, *September* 1916.

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# SELF-SELECTED ESSAYS.

## A SECOND SERIES.

### “JOHN BUNYAN THE TINKER.”

(1901)

THE Reverend Doctor Samuel Parr, perpetual curate of Hatton, rector of Graffham, and Prebend of St. Paul's, who was as good an imitation of Dr. Johnson as the Whigs ever deserved to have, was also among the last of the heavy-handed tribe of scholars, who have felt themselves at liberty to sneer in public at the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Let us listen—who knows it may not be for the last time?—to the voice of Parr, for whose mincing accents I have a genuine affection :

“ But fanaticism, when it has once taken possession of common minds,

“ ‘Nec modum habet, neque consilium ratione modoque  
Tractari non vult.’ ”—*Horat.*

“ The attic raillery of Addison, the caustic satire of Swift, the solid reasoning of Locke, the energetic eloquence of Barrow, the profound learning of Taylor,

Pearson, Bentley, and Stillingfleet, the pious expostulations of Christian Fathers, the glowing expostulations of Prophets, the simple, sage, and solemn preaching of Apostles, would be of little or no avail when opposed to them stand the

“θεόκλητοι, θεοδιδαγτοι, θεόοσσυτοι, θεόπνευστοι  
θεόγλωσσοι, κήρυκες Ιησου Χριστου,”

such as Whitfield, Wesley, Romaine, Haweis, Hawker, Rowland Hill, Newton the Midshipman, *Bunyan the Tinker*, Boehmen the Shoemaker, and other nameless rhapsodists.”

It is a fine rattle of names and adjectives, with a scrap of Latin and Greek thrown in. One remembers how, when Bunyan comes to use five Latin words in Dr. Skill's prescription, *Ex carne et sanguine Christi*, he modestly puts in the margin, “*The Latine I borrow*,” and so, after all, did the great Dr. Parr.

“The *Pilgrim's Progress*, from this world to that which is to come, delivered under the similitude of *A Dream*, wherein is discovered the manner of his setting out, his dangerous journey, and safe arrival at the desired country,” is one of the three or four books in the English language which are really so well known that they may safely be alluded to in any company. Were you to mention the *Pilgrim's Progress* to betting men on their way to Newmarket (and no one need anticipate being in worse company, either in this world or that which is to come), the odds will be in favour of at least one of them

having not only heard of the book, but being acquainted with an incident or two occurring in the first part. Of some of the coarser passages in *Gulliver's Travels* they may also prove to have a hazy recollection.

No doubt religious prejudice kept the *Pilgrim* out of some libraries. There was no copy of it in Archdeacon Froude's library down in Devonshire. Had there been we might have been spared some paragraphs in the *Remains* of one of his sons, and two early publications of another. J. A. Froude wrote a short life of Bunyan, but nothing could make up to him the loss of not having read about Giant Despair, Great-heart, and the Delectable Mountains,

"When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free  
In the silken sail of infancy."

Whether the children of to-day read the *Pilgrim* I do not know, yet as it is the very stuff of the imagination, the food of fancy, as full of movement as *Tom Jones*, of life as a plate of Hogarth, of characters as a play of Shakespeare's, of piety as a page of à Kempis, and at the same time is as free from Christian uncharitableness as the Sermon on the Mount, if they do not read the *Pilgrim's Progress* it is not because they are better employed.

John Bunyan, as everybody knows, was clapped into Bedford Gaol, and kept there, more or less rigorously, for nearly twelve years, from 1660 to 1671. His offence was as follows: "That John Bunyan, of the town of Bedford, labourer, hath



devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church to hear divine service, and is a common upholder of several unlawful meetings and conventicles, to the great disturbance and distraction of the good subjects of this kingdom, contrary to the laws of our Sovereign Lord the King."

Robert Southey, who spent the later years of his life in an insensate defence of tyranny, observes in his life of Bunyan that it was an excellent good thing to send him to prison, where his understanding had "leisure to ripen and cool." Had the hands of this indefatigable composer of quartos been tied behind his back for eleven years, no one to-day would be a penny the worse.

Bunyan, writes Macaulay, "owed his complete liberation to one of the worst Acts of one of the worst Governments that England has ever seen. In 1671 the Cabal was in power; Charles II. had concluded the treaty by which he bound himself to set up the Roman Catholic religion in England. The first step he took towards that end was to annul by an unconstitutional exercise of his prerogative all the penal statutes against the Roman Catholics, and in order to disguise his real design he annulled at the same time the penal statutes against Protestant Nonconformists. Bunyan was consequently set at large."

This was in 1671, and the first edition of the first part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* did not appear till seven years afterwards; a long time for an author who had not read Horace to keep a manuscript by his side. The tradition is, however, firm that it was

written in gaol. All students of Bunyan know the name of George Offor, and this is what he says about it :

“ Let us first consider honest John’s own testimony. He begins his allegory thus : ‘ As I walked through the wilderness of this world I lighted on a certain place where was a Den ; and I laid me down in that place to sleep ; and as I slept I dreamt a dream.’ In the margin (of the 7th edition) he tells us that the word Den means *The Gaol*, or as he spells it *the Goal*.”

This perhaps is good enough for me. I would as soon think of doubting the word of John Bunyan as would the House of Commons of doubting the word of Thomas Burt. Honesty is happily not confined to the Johns as is sometimes too hastily assumed, but Bunyan’s marginal note is not quite conclusive.

This first edition of 1678 is a great rarity. Macaulay, writing in 1854, said that not a single copy was known to be in existence. Macaulay knew so much that he may be forgiven for not knowing that, at the moment he was writing, a fine copy of the first edition was reposing in the library of Mr. R. S. Holford. This copy, long supposed to be unique, was found in a nobleman’s library, and had, judging from its appearance, never been read. Noblemen have their uses. The fate of the first edition of the *Pilgrim’s Progress* was to be read almost out of existence. However, there are now five known copies, but three of these are imperfect.

On the 9th of May 1901 a copy of the first edition, with the engraved portrait of Bunyan dreaming

(heretofore supposed to have first appeared with the third edition of 1679), was sold at Sotheby's Rooms, and though some of the margins were imperfect, and several letters of the text torn away, it realised £1,475, a sum for which you might buy messuages in Kent or a manor house in Essex.

A humbler little calf-skin volume was never handed round an auctioneer's table. Though the tallest copy in existence, its measurements are but  $5\frac{1}{16}$  by  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches.

It was whispered in the Rooms that it was to cross the Atlantic, and find a home, at all events for a season, in the United States of America. New countries naturally like old things, and it will be as safe in the strong room of a Wall Street operator as it could be anywhere else. Its buyer is not likely to read it.

Nor, indeed, could I, as a humble friend, recommend him to do so, for though a second edition was called for within a few months, and bears date the same year, Bunyan found time to make several important additions; how important, I leave the reader to judge for himself, when I tell him that in the first edition you will look in vain for the famous name of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. There is no more significant conversation in the whole book than the one between Christian and this well-bred gentleman.

“Christian: I know what I would obtain; it is ease for my heavy burden.

“Worldly-Wiseman: But why wilt thou seek for ease in this way, seeing so many dangers attend it,

especially since (hadst thou patience to hear me) I could direct thee to the obtaining of what thou desirest without the dangers that thou in this way wilt run thyself into ; yea the remedy is at hand. Besides, I will add that instead of these dangers, thou wilt meet with much safety, friendship, and content.”

A *Pilgrim's Progress* without a Worldly-Wiseman was strangely incomplete.

Again, in the tremendous scene when Apollyon strodled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said, “ Prepare thyself to die, for I swear by my infernal Den that thou shalt go no farther, here will I spill thy soul,” the invocation “ by my infernal Den ” was added in the second edition. How many generations of children would have lost a shudder had Bunyan died before making this superb addition !

Mr. By-Ends, of the Town of Fair-speech, does himself more justice in the second edition, where, in answer to Christian's polite inquiry, “ Pray, who are your kindred, if a man may be so bold ? ” he gives the following details for the first time : “ Almost the whole town ; and in particular my Lord Turn-about, my Lord Time-server, my Lord Fair-speech (from whose ancestors the town first took its name). Also Mr. Smoothman, Mr. Facing-both-ways, Mr. Anything, and the parson of our parish, Mr. Two-tongues, was my mother's own brother.”

It would indeed have been a thousand pities to have lost *Mr. Facing-both-ways*. We all know this

politician, and if a man might be so bold could call him by many names.

One more addition must be mentioned. In the first edition Giant Despair was a bachelor. In the second he is married. "Now Giant Despair had a wife, and her name was Diffidence." We all remember the terrible advice she gave her husband, "being in bed." She is a famous forerunner of Mrs. Proudie.

The first quite complete edition of the First Part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is the third which appeared in 1679. It is even rarer than the first. I have only heard of two copies, and one of these is imperfect. I am well acquainted with the perfect copy, which is in the Rowfant Library. The additions to the third edition are not, in my humble judgment, improvements; still, there they are.

In 1684, after the publication of ten editions of the First Part, the first edition of the Second Part appeared.

Bunyan would seem to have intended to publish a third part. The closing words of the Second Part clearly indicate so much, but his death in 1688 cut short his pilgrimage. A third part did appear, but it is an impudent forgery. *Ex quovis ligno non fit Mercurius*. The Latine I borrow from *Ainsworth's Dictionary*.

## SAMUEL RICHARDSON.

(1887)

IT is difficult to describe mankind either in a book or in a breath, and none but the most determined of philosophers or the most desperate of cynics have attempted to do so, either in one way or the other. Neither the philosophers nor the cynics can be said to have succeeded. The descriptions of the former are not recognizable, and therefore, as descriptions at all events, whatever may be their other merits, must be pronounced failures; whilst those of the cynics describe something which bears to ordinary human nature only the same sort of resemblance that chemically polluted waters bear to the stream as it flows higher up than the source of contamination, which in this case is the cynic himself.

But though it is hard to describe mankind, it is easy to distinguish between people. You may do this in a great many different ways: for example, there are those who can read Richardson's novels, and those who cannot.

Mr. Samuel Richardson, of Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, printer, was, if you have only an eye

for the outside, a humdrum person enough. Wittings, writing about him in the magazines, have often, out of consideration for their pretty little styles, and in order to avoid the too frequent repetition of his highly respectable if unromantic name, found it convenient to dub him the "little printer."

He undoubtedly was short of stature, and, in later life, obese in figure, but had he stood seven feet high in his stockings, these people would never have called him the "big printer." Richardson has always been exposed to a strong undercurrent of ridicule. I have known people to smile at the mention of his name, as if he were a sort of man-milliner—or, did the thing exist, as some day it may do, a male nursery governess. It is at first difficult to account for this strange colouring of the bubble reputation. Richardson's life, admirable as is Mrs. Barbauld's sketch, cannot be said to have been written; his letters—those, I mean, he wrote in his own name, not the nineteen volumes he made his characters write—have not been reprinted for more than eighty years. He of all men might be suffered to live only in his works, and when we turn to those works, what do we find? *Pamela* and *Clarissa* are both terribly realistic; they contain passages of horror, and are in parts profoundly pathetic, whilst *Clarissa* is desperately courageous. Fielding, with all his swagger and bounce, gold lace and strong language, has no more of the boldness than he has of the sublimity of the historian of *Clarissa Harlowe*. But these qualities avail Richardson nothing. The taint of afternoon tea still clings to him. The facts—the



harmless, perhaps the attractive, facts—that he preferred the society of ladies to that of his own sex, and liked to be surrounded by these, surely not strange creatures, in his gardens and grottos, first at North End, Hammersmith, and afterwards at Parson's Green, are still remembered against him. Life is indeed full of pitfalls, if estimates of a man's genius are to be formed by the garden-parties he gave, and the tea he consumed a century and a half ago. The real truth I believe to be this: we are annoyed with Richardson because he violates a tradition. The proper place for an eighteenth-century novelist was either the pot or the sponging-house. He ought to be either disguised in liquor or confined for debt. Richardson was never the one or the other. Let us see how this works: take Dr. Johnson; we all know how to describe him. He is our great moralist, the sturdy, the severe, the pious, the man who, as Carlyle puts it in his striking way, worshipped at St. Clement Danes in the era of Voltaire, or, as he again puts it, was our real primate, the true spiritual edifier and soul's teacher of all England. Here is one of our spiritual edifier's reminiscences: "I remember writing to Richardson from a sponging-house, and was so sure of my deliverance through his kindness and liberality, that before his reply was brought I knew I could afford to joke with the rascal who had me in custody, and did so over a pint of adulterated wine for which at that moment I had no money to pay."

This is the true, warm-hearted literary tradition of the eighteenth century. It is very amusing,

it is full of good feeling and fellowship, but the morality of the transaction from the great moralist's point of view is, like his linen, a trifle dingy. The soul's teacher of all England, laid by the heels in a sponging-house, and cracking jokes with a sheriff's officer over a pint of wine on the chance of another man paying for it, is a situation which calls for explanation. It is not my place to give it. Dr. Johnson was, in my judgment, all Carlyle declared him to be, and to have been called upon to set him free was to be proudly privileged, and, after all, why make such a fuss about trifles? The debt and costs together only amounted to £5, 18s., so that the six guineas Richardson promptly sent more than sufficed to get our "real primate" out of prison, and to pay for the pint. All I feel concerned to say here is, that the praise of this anecdote belongs to the little printer, and not to the great lexicographer. The hero of the parable of the Good Samaritan is the Good Samaritan himself, and not the unfortunate, and therefore probably foolish, traveller who must needs fall amongst thieves.

But if you violate traditions, and disturb people's notions as to what it is becoming for you to be, to do, or to suffer, you have to pay for it. An eighteenth-century novelist who first made a fortune by honest labour and the practice of frugality, and wrote his novels afterwards; who was fond of the society of ladies, and a vegetarian in later life; who divided his time between his shop and his villa, and became in due course master of a city company, is not what we have a right to expect, and makes a figure which

strongly contrasts with that of Richardson's great contemporary, the entirely manly Henry Fielding, whose very name rings in the true tradition ; whilst as for his books, to take up *Tom Jones* is like re-entering in middle life your old college rooms, where, so at least Dr. Holmes assures us,

“ You feel the old convivial glow (unaided) o'er you stealing,  
The warm, champagne, old-particular brandy-punchy feeling.”

It may safely be said of Richardson that, after attaining to independence, he did more good every week of his life—for he was a wise and most charitable man—than Fielding was ever able to do throughout the whole of his ; but this cannot alter the case, or excuse a violated tradition.

The position, therefore, of Richardson in our literature is that of a great Nonconformist. He was not manufactured according to any established process. If I may employ a metaphor borrowed from his own most honourable craft, he was set up in a new kind of type. He was born in 1689 in a Derbyshire village, the name of which, for some undiscovered reason, he would never tell. The son of poor parents—his father was a joiner—he had never any but a village school education, nor did he in later life worry much about learning, or seek, as so many printers have done, to acquire foreign tongues. At fourteen years of age he was bound apprentice to a printer in Aldersgate Street, and for seven years toiled after a fashion which would certainly nowadays be forbidden by Act of Parliament, were there the least likelihood of anybody

either demanding or performing drudgery so severe. When out of his apprenticeship, he worked for eight years as a compositor, reader, and overseer, and then, marrying his late master's daughter, set up for himself, and slowly but steadily grew prosperous and respected. His first wife dying, he married again, the daughter of a bookseller of Bath. At the age of fifty he published his first novel, *Pamela*. John Bunyan's life was not more unlike an Archbishop of Canterbury's than was Richardson's unlike the life of an ordinary English novelist of his period.

This simile to Nonconformity also holds good a little when we seek to ascertain the ambit of Richardson's popularity. To do this we must take wide views. We must not confine our attention to what may be called the high and dry school of literary orthodoxy. There, no doubt, Richardson has his admirers, just as Spurgeon's sermons have been seen peeping out from under a heap of archidiaconal, and even episcopal Charges, although the seat of Spurgeon's popularity is not in bishops' palaces, but in shop parlours. I do not mean by this that Richardson is now a popular novelist, for the fact, I suppose, is otherwise ; but I mean that to take the measure of his popularity you must look over the wide world and not merely at the clans and the cliques, the noble army of writers and the ever-lessening body of readers, who together constitute what are called literary circles. We must take wide views. We must not be content with the verdict of the university ; we must seek that of the kitchen : nor

is the distance ever great between these institutions.

There are well-authenticated instances of the extraordinary power *Pamela* possesses of affecting those who are not much in the habit of reading. There is a story of its being read aloud by a blacksmith round his anvil night after night, to a band of eager rustics, all dreadfully anxious good Mr. Richardson would only move on a little faster, and yet unwilling to miss a single one of poor Pamela's misadventures ; and of their greeting by hearty rounds of British cheers the happy issue out of her afflictions that awaits her, namely, her marriage with the cause of every one of them.

There are living writers who have written some admirable novels, and I have known people to be glad when they were finished, but never to the pitch of three times three.

I do not recommend any one to read *Pamela* ; to do so would be an impertinence. "I do not remember," says Charles Lamb, "a more whimsical surprise than having been once detected by a familiar damsel, reclining at my ease upon the grass on Primrose Hill, reading *Pamela*. There was nothing in the book to make a man seriously ashamed at the exposure ; but as she seated herself down by me, and seemed determined to read in company, I could have wished it had been—any other book. We read on very socially for a few pages ; and not finding the author much to her taste, she got up and went away. Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to conjecture whether the blush (for

there was one between us) was the property of the nymph or the swain in the dilemma. From me you shall never learn the secret." \*

Miss Pamela Andrews was, to tell the truth, a vulgar young person. There is nothing heroic or romantic about her ; she has not a touch or a trace of the moral sublimity of Jeannie Deans, who, though of the same rank of life, belonged to another country and had had an entirely different up-bringing. What a reply was that of Jeannie's to the Rev. Mr. Staunton, George Robertson's father, when he, entirely misapprehending the purport of her famous journey, lets her perceive that he fancies she is plotting for her own marriage with his son. Says the father to the son : " Perhaps you intend to fill up the cup of disobedience and profligacy by forming a low and disgraceful marriage ; but let me bid you beware." " If you were feared for sic a thing happening with me, sir," said Jeannie, " I can only say that not for all the land that lies between the twa ends of the rainbow wad I be the woman that should wed your son." " There is something very singular in all this," said the elder Staunton ; and so Pamela would have thought. She, honest girl that she was, was always ready to marry anybody's son, only she must have the marriage lines to keep in her desk and show to her dear parents.

The book's origin ought not to be overlooked. Some London booksellers, knowing Mr. Richardson to be a grave man of decorous life, and with a talent for moralizing, desired him to write a series of familiar

\* *Last Essays of Elia.*



letters on the behaviour of young women going out to service for the first time ; they never intended a novel : they wanted a manual of conduct—that conduct which, according to a precise Arithmetician, is three-fourths, or some other fraction, of human life. It was in this spirit that Richardson sat down to write *Pamela* and make himself famous. He had a facile pen, and the book, as it grew under his hand, outstripped its design, but never lost sight of it. It was intended for Pamelas, and is *bourgeois* to the very last degree. The language is simple, but its simplicity is not the noble, soul-stirring simplicity of Bunyan, nor is it the manly simplicity of Cobbett : it is the ignoble, and, at times, almost the odious, simplicity of a merely uncultured life. It abounds in vulgar phrases and vulgar thoughts ; still, it reflects powerfully the scenes it portrays, and you feel as you read a fine affinity between the communicating medium, the language, and the thing communicated, the story. When people said, in the flush of their first enthusiasm, as they did say, that there were but two good books in the world, the Bible, and *Pamela*, this is what, perhaps unconsciously, they were thinking of ; otherwise they were talking nonsense. Pamela was a vulgar little thing : her notions of honour and dishonour were neither lofty nor profound ; but she had them, and stuck to them in perilous paths along which the defenceless of her sex are too often called to tread ; and when finally her virtue is rewarded, and she is driven off in a chariot drawn by the four long-tailed mares upon whom she has been cruelly twitted for setting her



affections, I for one am quite prepared to join with the rustics round the blacksmith's anvil in loud cheers for Pamela.

Ten years after *Pamela* came *Clarissa*. It is not too much to say that not only Great Britain and Ireland (the latter country not yet deprived of her liberties by the Act of Union, and therefore in a position to pirate popular authors, after the agreeable fashion of our American cousins \*), but also France, Germany, and Holland, simply gulped *Clarissa* down; and she was in seven volumes. It was a kind of gospel, something good and something new. Its author was a stout tradesman of sixty, but he was not in the very least degree what is now called—perhaps to the point of nausea—a Philistine. By a Philistine I suppose we must understand some one who lives and moves and has his being in the realm of ordinary stock conventional ideas—a man who is as blind to the future as he is deaf to the past. For example, that Dr. Drummond, Archbishop of York, who just about this very time told the Rev. Mr. Conyers, one of his clergy, “that he would be better employed preaching the morality of Socrates than canting about the New Birth,” was a Philistine—I doubt not a very amiable one, but, being a Philistine, he had no chance of recognizing what this nascent methodism was, and as for dreaming what it might become—had he been capable of this—he would not have been a Philistine or, probably, Archbishop of York!

Richardson, on the other hand, had his quiver

\* Since abandoned.

full of new ideas ; he had his face to the east ; he was no mere inheritor, he was a progenitor. He is, in short, as has been often said, our Rousseau ; his characters were not stock characters. Think of Fielding's characters, his Tom Joneses and Booths, his Amelias and Sophias. They are stage properties as old as the Plantagenets. They are quite unidea'd, if I may use a word which, as applied to girls, has the authority of Dr. Johnson. Fielding's men are either good fellows with large appetites, which they gratify openly, or sneaks with equally large appetites, which they gratify on the sly, whilst the characters of his women are made to hinge solely upon their willingness or unwillingness to turn a blind eye. If they are ready to do this, they are angels ; Sophia comes upon the stage in a chapter headed " A short hint of what we can do in the sublime, and a description of Miss Sophia Western." The neglected Amelia, whenever she is forgiving her husband, is described as " all one blaze of beauty ; " but if they are not willing to play this rôle, why then they are unsexed and held up to the ridicule and reprobation of all good fellows and pretty women. This sort of thing was abhorrent to the soul of the little printer ; he hated Fielding's boisterous drunkards with an entire hatred. I believe he would have hated them almost as much if Fielding had not been a rival of his fame. He said he was not able to read any more than the first volume of *Amelia*, and as for *Tom Jones*, in the year 1750, he was audacious enough to say that its run was over. Regarded merely as writers, there can, I suppose, be no real rivalry between Fielding

and Richardson. The superiority of Fielding is apparent on every page. Wit, good-humour, a superb lusty style which carries you along like a pair of horses over a level moorland road, incidents, adventures, inns, and all the glory of motion, high spirits, huge appetites, pretty women—what a catalogue it makes ; of things no doubt smacking of this world and the kingdom thereof, but none the less delightful on that account ! No wonder *Tom Jones* is still running ; where, I should like to know, is the man bold enough to stop him ? But for all this, Richardson was the more remarkable and interesting man of the two ; and for the reason that he was the evangel of the new sentimentalism, that word which so puzzled one of his most charming correspondents, that she wrote to ask him what it meant—this new word sentimental which was just beginning to be in everybody's mouth. We have heard a good deal of it since.

*Clarissa Harlowe* has a place not merely amongst English novels, but amongst English women.

It was a new thing for a woman to be described as being not only in herself but by herself commendable and altogether lovely, as triumphing in her own right over the cruellest dishonour, and rejecting, with a noble scorn new to literature, the hand in marriage of the villain who had done her wrong. The book opened the flood-gates of human tears. The waters covered the earth. We cannot weep as they used to do in “ the brave days of old.”

Listen to the wife of a Lancashire baronet : “ I verily believe I have shed a pint of tears, my heart is still bursting though they cease not to flow at this

moment, nor will I fear for some time. . . . Had you seen me I surely should have moved your pity. When alone in agonies would I lay down the book, take it up again, walk about the room, let fall a flood of tears, wipe my eyes, read again, perhaps not three lines, throw away the book, crying out : ‘ Excuse me, good Mr. Richardson, I cannot go on ; it is your fault, you have done more than I can bear ; ’ threw myself upon my couch to compose ; again I read, again I acted the same part, sometimes agreeably interrupted by my dear man, who was at that time labouring through the sixth volume with a heart capable of impressions equal to my own—tho’ the effects shown in a more justifiable manner—which I believe may be compared to what Mr. Belfort felt when he found the beauteous sufferer in her prison-room. Something rose in my throat, I knew not what, which made me guggle as it were for speech.”

Nor did the men escape ; a most grave and learned man writes :

“ That *Pamela* and *Clarissa* have again obtained the *honour* of my perusal,” do you say, “ my dear Mr. Richardson ? I assure you I think it an *honour* to be able to say I have read, and as long as I have eyes will read, all your three most excellent *pieces* at least once a year, that I am capable of doing it with increasing pleasure which is perpetually doubled by the reflection, that this good man, this charming author, is *my friend*. I have been this day weeping over the seventh volume of *Clarissa* as if I had attended her dying bed and assisted at her funeral procession. Oh, may my latter end be like hers ! ”

It is no wonder the author of *Clarissa* had soon a great correspondence with ladies, married and single, young and old, virtuous and the reverse. Had he not written seven volumes, all about a girl? had he not made her beautiful, wise and witty, and learned withal? had he not depicted with extraordinary skill the character of the fascinating—the hitherto resistless Lovelace, who, though accomplishing *Clarissa's* ruin, does thereby but establish her triumph and confound himself? It is no doubt unhappily the case that far too many of Richardson's fair correspondents lacked the splendid courage of their master, and to his infinite annoyance fell in love with his arch-scamper, and prayed his creator that Lovelace might first be led to see the error of his ways, and then to the altar with the divine *Clarissa*. But the heroic printer was adamant to their cries, and he was right if ever man was. As well might *King Lear* end happily as *Clarissa Harlowe*.

The seven volumes caused immense talk and discussion, and it was all *Clarissa*, *Clarissa*, *Clarissa*. Sophia Western was, as we have seen, a comely girl enough, but she was as much like *Clarissa* as a ship in dock is like a ship at sea and on fire. What can you find to say of her, or to her? \* When you have dug Tom Jones in the ribs, and called him a lucky dog, and wished her happy. you turn away with a yawn; but *Clarissa*? Thackeray's account

\* Richardson in a letter says this of her, "the weak, the insipid, the runaway, the inn-frequenting Sophia;" and calls her lover "her illegitimate Tom." But nobody else need say this of Sophia; and as for Tom, he was declared to be a foundling from the first.

in the *Roundabout Papers* of Macaulay's rhapsody in the Athenæum Club is worth recalling to mind. "I spoke to him once about *Clarissa*. 'Not read *Clarissa*?' he cried out. 'If you have once thoroughly entered on *Clarissa* and are infected by it, you can't leave off. When I was in India I passed one hot season at the hills, and there were the governor-general, the secretary of government, the commander-in-chief, and their wives. I had *Clarissa* with me, and as soon as they began to read the whole station was in a passion of excitement about Miss Harlowe and her misfortunes, and her scoundrelly Lovelace. The governor's wife seized the book, and the secretary waited for it, and the chief justice could not read it for tears.'"

It is permissible to observe that lawyers have been great Richardsonians. The Rev. Mr. Loftus, writing to our author from Ireland, says: "I will tell you a story about your sweet girl Pamela. Our late lord chancellor,\* who was a man more remarkable for the goodness of his heart than even for the abilities of his head, which were of the most exalted kind, was so struck with her history that he sat up reading it the whole night, although it was then the middle of term, and declared to his family he could not find it in his heart to quit his book, nor imagined it to be so late by many hours."

The eminent Sergeant Hill, though averse to literature, used to set *Clarissa*'s will before his pupils, and bid them determine how many of its uses and trusts could be supported in court. I am sorry to have

\* Jocelyn, founder of the Roden peerage.



to add that in the learned sergeant's opinion poor Clarissa, in addition to all her other misfortunes, died intestate.

All this commotion and excitement and Clarissa-worship meant that something was brewing, and that good Mr. Richardson, with his fat round face flushed with the fire, had his ladle in the pan and was busy stirring it about. What is called the correspondence of Samuel Richardson, which was edited by that admirable woman, Mrs. Barbauld, and published in six volumes in 1804, is mostly made up, not of letters from, but to, the author of *Clarissa*. All the more effectually on that account does it let us into the manufactory of his mind. The letters a man receives are perhaps more significant of his real character than those he writes. People did not write to Mr. Richardson about themselves or about their business, or about literature, unless it were to say they did not like *Tom Jones*, or about politics, or other sports, but they wrote to him about himself and his ideas, his good woman, Clarissa, his good man, Sir Charles, and the true relation between the sexes. They are immense fun, these letters, but they ought also to be taken seriously; Mr. Richardson took them as seriously as he always took himself. There was, perhaps, only one subject Richardson regarded as of equal importance with himself, and that was the position of woman. This is why he hated Fielding, the triumphant orthodox Fielding, to whom man was a rollicking sinner, and woman a loving slave. He pondered on this subject, until the anger within him imparts to



his style a virility and piquancy not usually belonging to it. The satire in the following extract from a letter he wrote to the good lady who shed a pint of tears over *Clarissa* is pungent : “ Man is an animal that must bustle in the world, go abroad, converse, fight battles, encounter other dangers of seas, winds, and I know not what, in order to protect, provide for, maintain in ease and plenty, women. Bravery, anger, fierceness are made familiar to them. They buffet and are buffeted by the world ; are impatient and uncontrollable ; they talk of honour, run their heads against stone walls to make good their pretensions to it, and often quarrel with one another and fight duels upon any other silly thing that happens to raise their choler—their shadows, if you please ; while women are meek, passive, good creatures, who used to stay at home, set their maids at work, and formerly themselves, get their houses in order to receive, comfort, oblige, give joy to their fierce, fighting, bustling, active protectors, providers, maintainers, divert him with pretty pug’s tricks, tell him soft tales of love, and of who and who’s together, what has been done in his absence, bring to him little master, so like his own dear papa, and little pretty miss, a soft, sweet, smiling soul, with her sampler in her hand, so like what her meek mamma was at her years.”

You cannot, indeed, lay hold of many particular things which Richardson advocated. Ignorant of the classics himself, he was by no means disposed to advise the teaching of them to women. *Clarissa*, indeed, knew Latin, but Harriet Byron did not.

The second Mrs. Richardson was just a little bit too much for her husband, and he was consequently led to hold what may be called "high doctrine" as to the duty of wives obeying their husbands. Though never was man less of a revolutionary than Richardson, still he was on the side of the revolution. He had an ethical system different from that which stood beside him. This did not escape the notice of a keen-witted contemporary, the great Smollett, whose own Roderick Randoms and Peregrine Pickles are such unmitigated, high-coloured ruffians as to induce Sir Walter Scott to call him the Rubens of fiction, but who none the less had an eye for the future; he in his history speaks in terms of high admiration of the sublime code of ethics of the author of *Clarissa*. Richardson was fierce against duelling, and also against corporal punishment. He had the courage to deplore the evil effects produced by the works of Homer, "that fierce, fighting *Iliad*," as he called it. We may be sure his children were never allowed to play with tin soldiers, at least, not with their father's consent.

Having written *Clarissa*, it became inevitable that Richardson should proceed further and write *Grandison*. In reading his correspondence we hail Sir Charles afar off. Richardson had deeply grieved to see how many of his ladies had fallen in love with the scoundrelly Lovelace. It wounded him to the quick, for he could not but feel that he was not in the least like Lovelace himself. He turns almost savagely upon some of his fair correspondents and upbraids them, telling them indeed plainly that he

feared they were no better than they should be. They had but one answer : “ Ah, dear Mr. Richardson, in *Clarissa* you have shown us the good woman we all would be. Now show us the good man we all should love.” And he set about doing so seriously, aye and humbly, too. He writes with a sad sincerity a hundred years cannot hide :

“ How shall a man obscurely situated, never in his life delighting in public entertainments, nor in his youth able to frequent them from narrowness of fortune ; one of the most attentive of men to the calls of business—his situation for many years producing little but prospects of a numerous family—a business that seldom called him abroad when he might in the course of it see and know a little of the world, as some employments give opportunities to do—naturally shy and sheepish, and wanting more encouragement by smiles to draw him out than anybody thought it worth their while to give him—and blest (in this he will say blest) with a mind that set him above dependence, and making an absolute reliance on Providence and his own endeavours—how, I say, shall such a man pretend to describe and enter into characters in upper life ? ”

However, he set about it, and in 1754 produced *Sir Charles Grandison*, or, as he had originally intended to call it, the *Good Man*, in six octavo volumes.

I am not going to say he entirely succeeded with his good man, who I know has been called an odious prig. Sir Walter Scott, in his delightful, good-humoured fashion, tells a tale of a venerable lady of

his acquaintance, who, when she became subject to drowsy fits, chose to have *Sir Charles* read to her as she sat in her elbow chair, in preference to any other work ; because, said she, should I drop asleep in the course of the reading, I am sure when I awake I shall have lost none of the story, but shall find the party where I left them, conversing in the cedar-parlour."

After *Sir Charles*, Richardson wrote no more. Indeed, there was nothing to write about, unless he had taken the advice of a morose clerical friend who wrote to him : " I hope you intend to give us a bad woman—expensive, imperious, lewd, and, at last, a drammer. This is a fruitful and necessary subject which will strike and entertain to a miracle." Mr. Richardson replied jocosely that if the Rev. Mr. Skelton would only sketch the she-devil for him, he would find room for her somewhere, and the subject dropped. The wife of the celebrated German poet, Klopstock, wrote to him in her broken English : " Having finished your *Clarissa* (oh, the heavenly book !) I would prayed you to write the history of a manly *Clarissa*, but I had not courage enough at that time. I should have it no more to-day, as this is only my first English letter ; but I am now Klopstock's wife, and then I was only the single young girl. You have since written the manly *Clarissa* without my prayer. Oh, you have done it to the great joy and thanks of all your happy readers ! Now you can write no more. You must write the history of an Angel."

The poor lady died the following year in melan-

choly circumstances, but her prophecy proved true. Richardson wrote no more. He died in 1761, seventy-two years of age. His will, after directing numerous mourning-rings to be given to certain friends, proceeds as follows: "Had I given rings to all the ladies who have honoured me with their correspondence, and whom I sincerely venerate for their amiable qualities, it would even in this last solemn act appear like ostentation."

Until quite recently Richardson, Sterne, and Goldsmith may be said to have been the only popular English authors abroad. The celebrated author of *Manon Lescaut* translated *Clarissa* into French, though it was subsequently better done by a less famous hand. She was also turned into German and Dutch. Foreigners, of course, could not be expected to appreciate the hopeless absurdity of a man who lived at Parson's Green attempting to describe the upper classes. Horace Walpole when in Paris did his best to make this plain, but he failed. Say what he might, *Clarissa* lay on the toilet-tables of the French princesses, and everybody was raving about her. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was also very angry. "Richardson," says she, writing to the Countess of Bute, "has no idea of the manners of high life. Such liberties as pass between Mr. Lovelace and his cousins are not to be excused by the relation. I should have been much astonished if Lord Denbigh should have offered to kiss me; and I dare swear Lord Trentham never attempted such impertinence to you." To the English reader these criticisms of Lady Mary's have immense value; but the French

sentimentalist, with his continental insolence, did not care a sou what impertinences Lord Denbigh and Lord Trentham might or might not have attempted towards their female cousins. He simply read *Clarissa* and lifted up his voice and wept: and so, to do her justice, did Lady Mary herself. "This Richardson," she writes, "is a strange fellow. I heartily despise him and eagerly read him, nay, sob over his works in a most scandalous manner."

The effect produced upon Rousseau by Richardson is historical. Without *Clarissa* there would have been no *Nouvelle Héloïse*, and had there been no *Nouvelle Héloïse*, every one of us would have been somewhat different from what we are.

The elaborate eulogy of Diderot is well known, and, though extravagant in parts, is full of true criticism. One sentence only I will quote: "I have observed," he says, "that in a company where the works of Richardson were reading either privately or aloud the conversation at once became more interesting and animated." This is a legitimate test to which to submit a novel, but the conversation should not begin until the reading was over.

Napoleon was a true Richardsonian. Only once did he ever seem to take any interest in an Englishman. It was whilst he was first consul and when he was introduced to an officer called Lovelace: "Why," he exclaimed with emotion, "that is the name of the man in *Clarissa*!" When our own great critic, Hazlitt, heard of this incident he fell in love with Napoleon on the spot, and subsequently wrote his life in four volumes.



In Germany *Clarissa* had a great sale, and those of us who are acquainted with German sentiment will have no difficulty in tracing a good deal of it to its original fountain in Fleet Street.

As a man, Richardson had two faults. He was very nervous on the subject of his health, and he was very vain. His first fault gave a great deal of trouble to his wives and families, his second afforded nobody anything but pleasure. The vanity of a distinguished man, if at the same time he happens to be a good man, is a quality so agreeable in its manifestations that to look for it and not to find it would be to miss a pleasure. When Boileau was invited to Versailles by Louis Quatorze, he was much annoyed by the vanity of that monarch. "Whenever," said he, "the conversation left the king's doings"—and, let us guess, just approached the poet's verses—"his majesty always had a yawning-fit, or suggested a walk on the terrace." The fact is, it is not vanity, but contending vanities that give pain.

As for those who cannot read Richardson's nineteen volumes, it can only be said they are a large and intelligent class of persons, numbering amongst them poets like Byron—for I presume Byron is still among the poets—and philosophers like d'Alembert, who, when asked whether Richardson was not right in imitating Nature, replied, "Yes, but not to the point of ennui."

A French critic, M. Scherer, once had the audacity to doubt whether *Tristram Shandy* is much read in England, and it is commonly asserted in France that



*Clarissa* is too good for us. Tristram may be left to his sworn admirers, who could at any moment take the field with all the pomp and circumstance of war, but with *Clarissa* it is different. Her body-guard is small and often stands in need of recruits.

## EDMUND BURKE.

A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE EDINBURGH  
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

(1886)

MR. JOHN MORLEY, who among other things has written two admirable books (in 1867 and 1878) about Edmund Burke, is to be found in the Preface to the second of them apologizing for having introduced into the body of the work extracts from his former volume—conduct which he seeks to justify by quoting from the Greek (always a desirable thing to do when in difficulty), to prove that, though you may say what you have to say well once, you cannot so say it twice.

A difficulty somewhat of the same kind cannot fail to be felt by every one who takes upon himself to write on Burke ; for however innocent a man's own past life may be of any public references to the subject, the very many good things other men have said about it must seriously interfere with true liberty of treatment.

Hardly any man, and certainly no politician, has been so bepraised as Burke, whose name, suggesting, as it does, splendour of diction, has tempted

those who would praise him to do so in a highly decorated style, and it would have been easy work to have brought together a sufficient number of animated passages from the works of well-known writers all dedicated to the greater glory of Edmund Burke, and then to have tagged on half-a-dozen specimens of his own resplendent rhetoric, and so to have come to an apparently natural and long-desired conclusion without exciting any more than the usual post-lectorial grumble.

This course, however, not recommending itself, some other method had to be discovered. Happily, it is out of the question within present limits to give any proper summary of Burke's public life. Even were we to confine ourselves to those questions only which engaged Burke's most powerful attention, enlisted his most active sympathy, elicited his most bewitching rhetoric, we should still find ourselves called upon to grapple with problems as vast and varied as Economic Reform, the Status of our Colonies, our Empire in India, our relations with Ireland both in respect to her trade and her prevalent religion ; and then, blurring the picture, as some may think—certainly rendering it Titanesque and gloomy—we have the spectacle of Burke in his old age, like another Laocoon, writhing and wrestling with the French Revolution ; and it may serve to give us some dim notion of how great a man Burke was, of how affluent a mind, of how potent an imagination, of how resistless an energy, that even when his sole unassisted name is pitted against the outcome of centuries, and we say Burke and the French

Revolution, we are not overwhelmed by any sense of obvious absurdity or incongruity.

What I propose to do is merely to consider a little Burke's life prior to his obtaining a seat in Parliament, and then to refer to any circumstances which may help us to account for the fact that this truly extraordinary man, whose intellectual resources beggar the imagination, and who devoted himself to politics with all the forces of his nature, never so much as attained to a seat in the Cabinet—a feat one has known to be accomplished by persons of no proved intellectual agility. Having done this, I shall then, bearing in mind the aphorism of Lord Beaconsfield, that it is always better to be impudent than servile, essay an analysis of the essential elements of Burke's character.

The first great fact to remember is that the Edmund Burke we are all agreed in regarding as one of the proudest memories of the House of Commons was an Irishman. When we are in our next fit of political depression about that Island, and are about piously to wish, as the poet Spenser tells us men were wishing even in his time, that it were not adjacent, let us do a little national stocktaking, and calculate profits as well as losses. Burke was not only an Irishman, but a typical one—of the very kind many Englishmen, and even possibly some Scotsmen, make a point of disliking. I do not say he was an aboriginal Irishman, but his ancestors are said to have settled in the county of Galway, under Strongbow, in King Henry the Second's time, when Ireland was first conquered and our troubles began

This, at all events, is a better Irish pedigree than Mr. Parnell's.

Skipping six centuries, we find Burke's father an attorney in Dublin, who in 1725 married a Miss Nagle and had fifteen children. The marriage of Burke's parents was of the kind called mixed—a term which when employed technically signifies that the religious faith of the spouses was different ; one, the father, being a Protestant, and the lady an adherent to what used to be pleasantly called the “ old religion.” The severer spirit now dominating Catholic councils has condemned these marriages, on the score of their bad theology and their lax morality ; but the practical politician cannot but regret that so good an opportunity of lubricating religious differences with the sweet oil of the domestic affections should be lost to us in these days of bitterness and dissension. Burke was brought up in the Protestant faith of his father, and was never in any real danger of deviating from it ; but I cannot doubt that his regard for his Catholic fellow-subjects, his fierce repudiation of the infamies of the Penal Code—the horrors of which he did something to mitigate—his respect for antiquity, and his historic sense, were all quickened by the fact that a tenderly loved and loving mother belonged through life and in death to an ancient and outraged faith.

The great majority of Burke's brothers and sisters, like those of Laurence Sterne, were “ not made to live ; ” and out of the fifteen but three, beside himself, attained maturity. These were his eldest brother Garrett, on whose death Edmund succeeded

to the patrimonial Irish estate, which he sold ; his younger brother Richard, a highly speculative gentleman, who always lost ; and his sister, Juliana, who married a Mr. French, and was, as became her mother's daughter, a rigid Roman Catholic—who, so we read, was accustomed every Christmas Day to invite to the Hall the maimed, the aged, and distressed of her vicinity to a plentiful repast, during which she waited upon them as a servant. A sister like this never did any man any serious harm.

Edmund Burke was born in 1729, in Dublin, and was taught his rudiments in the country—first by a Mr. O'Halloran, and afterwards by a Mr. FitzGerald, village pedagogues both, who at all events succeeded in giving their charge a brogue which death alone could silence. Burke passed from their hands to a famous academy at Ballitore, kept by a Quaker, whence he proceeded to Trinity College, Dublin. He was thus not only Irish born, but Irish bred. His intellectual habit of mind exhibited itself early. He belonged to the happy family of omnivorous readers, and, in the language of his latest schoolmaster, he went to college with a larger miscellaneous stock of reading than was usual with one of his years ; which, being interpreted out of pedagogic into plain English, means that " our good Edmund " was an enormous devourer of poetry and novels, and so he remained to the end of his days. That he always preferred Fielding to Richardson is satisfactory, since it pairs him off nicely with Dr. Johnson, whose preference was the other way, and so helps to keep an interesting question wide open.

His passion for the poetry of Virgil is significant. His early devotion to Edward Young, the grandiose author of the *Night Thoughts*, is not to be wondered at ; though the inspiration of the youthful Burke, either as poet or critic, may be questioned, when we find him rapturously scribbling in the margin of his copy :

“ Jove claimed the verse old Homer sung,  
But God Himself inspired Dr. Young.”

In 1750 Burke (being then twenty-one) came for the first time to London, to do what so many of his lively young countrymen are still doing—eat his dinners at the Middle Temple, and so qualify himself for the Bar. Certainly that student was in luck who found himself in the same mess with Burke ; and yet so stupid are men—so prone to rest with their full weight on the immaterial and slide over the essential—that had that good fortune been ours we should probably have been more taken up with Burke’s brogue than with his brains. Burke came to London with a cultivated curiosity, and in no spirit of desperate determination to make his fortune. That the study of the law interested him cannot be doubted, for everything interested him, particularly the stage. Like the sensible Irishman he was, he lost his heart to Peg Woffington on the first opportunity. He was fond of roaming about the country, during, it is to be hoped, vacation-time only, and is to be found writing the most cheerful letters to his friends in Ireland (all of whom are persuaded that he is going some day to be somebody, though sorely puzzled to surmise what thing or when, so pleasantly



does he take life), from all sorts of out-of-the-way country places, where he lodges with quaint old landladies who wonder maternally why he never gets drunk, and generally mistake him for an author until he pays his bill. When in town he frequented debating societies in Fleet Street and Covent Garden, and made his first speeches ; for which purpose he would, unlike some debaters, devote studious hours to getting up the subjects to be discussed. There is good reason to believe that it was in this manner his attention was first directed to India. He was at all times a great talker, and, Dr. Johnson's dictum notwithstanding, a good listener. He was endlessly interested in everything—in the state of the crops, in the last play, in the details of all trades, the rhythm of all poems, the plots of all novels, and, indeed, in the course of every manufacture. And so for six years he went up and down, to and fro, gathering information, imparting knowledge, and preparing himself, though he knew not for what.

The attorney in Dublin grew anxious, and searched for precedents of a son behaving like his, and rising to eminence. Had his son got the legal mind?—which, according to a keen observer, chiefly displays itself by illustrating the obvious, explaining the evident, and expatiating on the commonplace. Edmund's powers of illustration, explanation, and expatiation could not indeed be questioned ; but then the subjects selected for the exhibition of those powers were very far indeed from being obvious, evident, or commonplace, and the attorney's heart grew heavy within him. The paternal displeasure

was signified in the usual manner—the supplies were cut off. Edmund Burke, however, was no ordinary prodigal, and his reply to his father's expostulations took the unexpected and unprecedented shape of a copy of a second and enlarged edition of his treatise on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, which he had published in 1756 at the price of three shillings. Burke's father promptly sent the author a bank-bill for £100—conduct on his part which, considering he had sent his son to London and maintained him there for six years to study law, was, in my judgment, both sublime and beautiful. In the same year Burke published another pamphlet—a one-and-sixpenny affair—written ironically in the style of Lord Bolingbroke, and called *A Vindication of Natural Society; or, A View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from Every Species of Civil Society*. Irony is a dangerous weapon for a public man to have ever employed, and in after-life Burke had frequently to explain that he was not serious. On these two pamphlets' airy pinions Burke floated into the harbour of literary fame. No less a man than the great David Hume referred to him, in a letter to the hardly less great Adam Smith, as an Irish gentleman who had written a “very pretty treatise on the Sublime.” After these efforts Burke, as became an established wit, went to Bath to recruit, and there, fitly enough, fell in love. The lady was Miss Jane Mary Nugent, the daughter of a celebrated Bath physician, and it is pleasant to be able to say of the marriage that was shortly solemnized between the young couple, that it was a happy one and then

to go on our way, leaving them—where man and wife ought to be left—alone. Oddly enough, Burke's wife was also the offspring of a "mixed marriage"—only in her case it was the father who was the Catholic; consequently both Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Burke were of the same way of thinking, but each had a parent of the other way. Although getting married is no part of the curriculum of a law student, Burke's father seems to have come to the conclusion that after all it was a greater distinction for an attorney in Dublin to have a son living amongst the wits in London, and discoursing familiarly on the "Sublime and Beautiful," than one prosecuting some poor countryman, with a brogue as rich as his own, for stealing a pair of breeches; for we find him generously allowing the young couple £200 a year, which no doubt went some way towards maintaining them. Burke, who was now in his twenty-eighth year, seems to have given up all notion of the law. In 1758 he wrote for Dodsley the first volume of the *Annual Register*, a melancholy series which continues to this day. For doing this he got £100. Burke was by this time a well-known figure in London literary society, and was busy making for himself a huge private reputation. The Christmas Day of 1758 witnessed a singular scene at the dinner table of David Garrick. Dr. Johnson was flatly contradicted by a fellow-guest some twenty years his junior, and, what is more, submitted to it without a murmur. One of the diners, Arthur Murphy, was so struck by this occurrence, unique in his long experience of the Doctor, that on returning

home, he recorded the fact in his journal, but ventured no explanation of it. It can only be accounted for by the combined effect of four wholly independent circumstances : *First*, the day was Christmas Day, a day of peace and goodwill, and our beloved Doctor was amongst the sincerest, though most argumentative, of Christians, and a great observer of days. *Second*, the house was David Garrick's, and consequently we may be certain that the dinner had been a superlatively good one ; and has not Boswell placed on record Johnson's opinion of the man who professed to be indifferent about his dinner ? *Third*, the subject under discussion was India, about which Johnson knew he knew next to nothing. And *fourth*, the offender was Edmund Burke, whom Johnson loved from the first day he set eyes upon him to their last sad parting by the waters of death.

In 1761 that shrewd old gossip, Horace Walpole, met Burke for the first time at dinner, and remarks of him in a letter to George Montague :

" I dined at Hamilton's yesterday ; there were Garrick, and young Mr. Burke, who wrote a book in the style of Lord Bolingbroke, that was much admired. He is a sensible man, but has not worn off his authorism yet, and thinks there is nothing so charming as writers, and to be one. He will know better one of these days."

But great as were Burke's literary powers, and passionate as was his fondness for letters and for literary society, he never seems to have felt that the main burden of his life lay in that direction. He looked to the public service, and this though he

always believed that the pen of a great writer was a more powerful and glorious weapon than any to be found in the armoury of politics. This faith of his comes out sometimes queerly enough. For example, when Dr. Robertson in 1777 sent Burke his cheerful *History of America*, in quarto volumes, Burke, in the most perfect good faith, closes a long letter of thanks thus :

“ You will smile when I send you a trifling temporary production made for the occasion of the day, and to perish with it, in return for your immortal work.”

I have no desire, least of all in Edinburgh, to say anything disrespectful of Principal Robertson ; but still, when we remember that the temporary production he got in exchange for his *History of America* was Burke's immortal letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the American War, we must, I think, be forced to admit that, as so often happens when a Scotsman and an Irishman do business together, the former got the better of the bargain.

Burke's first public employment was of a humble character, and might well have been passed over in a sentence, had it not terminated in a most delightful quarrel, in which Burke conducted himself like an Irishman of genius. Some time in 1759 he became acquainted with William Gerard Hamilton, commonly called “ Single-speech Hamilton,” on account of the celebrity he gained from his first speech in Parliament, and the steady way in which his oratorical reputation went on waning ever after. In 1761 this gentleman went over to Ireland as

Chief Secretary, and Burke accompanied him as the Secretary's secretary, or, in the unlicensed speech of Dublin, as Hamilton's jackal. This arrangement was eminently satisfactory to Hamilton, who found, as generations of men have found after him, Burke's brains very useful, and he determined to borrow them for the period of their joint lives. Animated by this desire, in itself praiseworthy, he busied himself in procuring for Burke a pension of £300 a year on the Irish establishment, and then the simple "Single-speech" thought the transaction closed. He had bought his poor man of genius, and paid for him on the nail with other people's money. Nothing remained but for Burke to draw his pension and devote the rest of his life to maintaining Hamilton's reputation. There is nothing at all unusual in this, and I have no doubt Burke would have stuck to his bargain, had not Hamilton conceived the fatal idea that Burke's brains were *exclusively* his (Hamilton's). Then the situation became one of risk and apparent danger.

Burke's imagination began playing round the subject: he saw himself a slave, blotted out of existence—mere fuel for Hamilton's flame. In a week he was in a towering passion. Few men can afford to be angry. It is a run upon their intellectual resources they cannot meet. But Burke's treasury could well afford the luxury; and his letters to Hamilton make delightful reading to those who, like myself, dearly love a dispute when conducted according to the rules of the game by a man of great intellectual wealth. Hamilton demolished and re-



duced to stony silence, Burke sat down again and wrote long letters to all his friends, telling them the whole story from beginning to end. I must be allowed a quotation from one of these letters, for this really is not so frivolous a matter as I am afraid I have made it appear—a quotation of which this much may be said, that nothing more delightfully Burkean is to be found anywhere :

“ MY DEAR MASON,

“ I am hardly able to tell you how much satisfaction I had in your letter. Your approbation of my conduct makes me believe much the better of you and myself ; and I assure you that that approbation came to me very seasonably. Such proofs of a warm, sincere, and disinterested friendship were not wholly unnecessary to my support at a time when I experienced such bitter effects of the perfidy and ingratitude of much longer and much closer connections. The way in which you take up my affairs binds me to you in a manner I cannot express ; for, to tell you the truth, I never can (knowing as I do the principles upon which I always endeavour to act) submit to any sort of compromise of my character ; and I shall never, therefore, look upon those who, after hearing the whole story, do not think me *perfectly* in the right, and do not consider Hamilton an infamous scoundrel, to be in the smallest degree my friends, or even to be persons for whom I am bound to have the slightest esteem, as fair and just estimators of the characters and conduct of men. Situated as I am, and feeling as I do, I should be just as



well pleased that they totally condemned me as that they should say there were faults on both sides, or that it was a disputable case, as I hear is (I cannot forbear saying) the affected language of some persons. . . . You cannot avoid remarking, my dear Mason, and I hope not without some indignation, the unparalleled singularity of my situation. Was ever a man before me expected to enter into formal, direct, and undisguised slavery? Did ever man before him confess an attempt to decoy a man into such an alleged contract, not to say anything of the impudence of regularly pleading it? If such an attempt be wicked and unlawful (and I am sure no one ever doubted it), I have only to confess his charge, and to admit myself his dupe, to make him pass, on his own showing, for the most consummate villain that ever lived. The only difference between us is, not whether he is not a rogue—for he not only admits but pleads the facts that demonstrate him to be so; but only whether I was such a fool as to sell myself absolutely for a consideration which, so far from being adequate, if any such could be adequate, is not even so much as certain. Not to value myself as a gentleman, a free man, a man of education, and one pretending to literature; is there any situation in life so low, or even so criminal, that can subject a man to the possibility of such an engagement? Would you dare attempt to bind your footmen to such terms? Will the law suffer a felon sent to the plantations to bind himself for his life, and to renounce all possibility either of elevation or quiet? And am I to defend myself for not

doing what no man is suffered to do, and what it would be criminal in any man to submit to? You will excuse me for this heat."

I not only excuse Burke for his heat, but love him for letting me warm my hands at it after a lapse of a hundred and twenty years.

Burke was more fortunate in his second master, for in 1765, being then thirty-six years of age, he became private secretary to the new Prime Minister, the Marquis of Rockingham; was by the interest of Lord Verney returned to Parliament for Wendover, in Bucks; and on January 27, 1766, his voice was first heard in the House of Commons.

The Rockingham Ministry deserves well of the historian, and on the whole has received its deserts. Lord Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond, Lord John Cavendish, Mr. Dowdeswell, and the rest of them were good men and true, judged by an ordinary standard; and when contrasted with most of their political competitors, they almost approach the ranks of saints and angels. However, after a year and twenty days, his Majesty King George the Third managed to get rid of them, and to keep them at bay for fifteen years. But their first term of office, though short, lasted long enough to establish a friendship of no ordinary powers of endurance between the chief members of the party and the Prime Minister's private secretary, who was at first, so ran the report, supposed to be a wild Irishman, whose real name was O'Bourke, and whose brogue seemed to require the allegation that its owner was a popish

emissary. It is satisfactory to notice how from the very first Burke's intellectual pre-eminence, character, and aims were clearly admitted and most cheerfully recognized by his political and social superiors ; and in the long correspondence in which he engaged with most of them there is not a trace to be found, on one side or the other, of anything approaching to either patronage or servility. Burke advises them, exhorts them, expostulates with them, condemns their aristocratic languor, fans their feeble flames, drafts their motions, dictates their protests, visits their houses, and generally supplies them with facts, figures, poetry, and romance. To all this they submit with much humility. The Duke of Richmond once indeed ventured to hint to Burke, with exceeding delicacy, that he (the Duke) had a small private estate to attend to as well as public affairs ; but the validity of the excuse was not admitted. The part Burke played for the next fifteen years with relation to the Rockingham party reminds me of the functions I have observed performed in lazy families by a soberly clad and eminently respectable person who pays them domiciliary visits, and, having admission everywhere, goes about mysteriously from room to room, winding up all the clocks. This is what Burke did for the Rockingham party—he kept it going.

But fortunately for us, Burke was not content with private adjuration, or even public speech. His literary instincts, his dominating desire to persuade everybody that he, Edmund Burke, was absolutely in the right, and every one of his opponents hope-

lessly wrong, made him turn to the pamphlet as a propaganda, and in his hands

“The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew  
Soul-animating strains.”

So accustomed are we to regard Burke's pamphlets as specimens of our noblest literature, and to see them printed in comfortable volumes, that we are apt to forget that in their origin they were but the children of the pavement, the publications of the hour. If, however, you ever visit any old public library, and grope about a little, you are likely enough to find a shelf holding some twenty-five or thirty musty, ugly little books, usually lettered “Burke,” and on opening any of them you will come across one of Burke's pamphlets as originally issued, bound up with the replies and counter-pamphlets it occasioned. I have frequently tried, but usually in vain, to read these replies, which are pretentious enough—usually the works of deans, members of Parliament, and other dignitaries of the class Carlyle used compendiously to describe as “shovel-hatted”—and each of whom was as much entitled to publish pamphlets as Burke himself. There are some things it is very easy to do, and to write a pamphlet is one of them; but to write such a pamphlet as future generations will read with delight is perhaps the most difficult feat in literature.

I have now rather more than kept my word so far as Burke's pre-parliamentary life is concerned, and will proceed to mention some of the circumstances that may serve to account for the fact that, when the

Rockingham party came into power for the second time in 1782, Burke, who was their life and soul, was only rewarded with a minor office. First, then, it must be recorded sorrowfully of Burke that he was always desperately in debt, and in this country no politician under the rank of a baronet can ever safely be in debt. Burke's finances are, and always have been, marvels and mysteries ; but one thing must be said of them—that the malignity of his enemies, both Tory enemies and Radical enemies, has never succeeded in formulating any charge of dishonesty against him that has not been at once completely pulverized, and shown on the facts to be impossible.\* Burke's purchase of the estate at Beaconsfield in 1768, only two years after he entered Parliament, consisting as it did of a good house and 1,600 acres of land, has puzzled a great many good men—much more than it ever did Edmund Burke. But how did he get the money? After an Irish fashion—by not getting it at all. Two-thirds of the purchase-money remained on mortgage, and the balance he borrowed ; or, as he puts it, “ With all I could collect of my own, and by the aid of my friends, I have established a root in the country.” That is how Burke bought Beaconsfield where he lived

\* All the difficulties connected with this subject will be found collected, and somewhat unkindly considered, in Mr. Dilke's *Papers of a Critic*, vol. ii. The equity draftsman will be indisposed to attach importance to statements made in a Bill of Complaint filed in Chancery by Lord Verney against Burke fourteen years after the transaction to which it had reference, in a suit which was abandoned after answer put in. But, in justice to a deceased plaintiff, it should be remembered that in those days a defendant could not be cross-examined upon his sworn answer.

till his end came ; whither he always hastened when his sensitive mind was tortured by the thought of how badly men governed the world ; where he entertained all sorts and conditions of men—Quakers, Brahmins (for whose ancient rites he provided suitable accommodation in a greenhouse), nobles and abbés flying from revolutionary France, poets, painters, and peers ; no one of whom ever long remained a stranger to his charm. Burke flung himself into farming with all the enthusiasm of his nature.

His letters to Arthur Young on the subject of carrots still tremble with emotion. You all know Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*. You remember—it is hard to forget—his speech on Conciliation with America, particularly the magnificent passage beginning, “Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom, and a great empire and little minds go ill together.” You have echoed back the words in which, in his letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the foolish American War, he protests that it was not instantly he could be brought to rejoice when he heard of the slaughter and captivity of long lists of those whose names had been familiar in his ears from his infancy, and you would all join with me in subscribing to a fund which should have for its object the printing and hanging up over every editor's desk in town and country a subsequent passage from the same letter :

“A conscientious man would be cautious how he dealt in blood. He would feel some apprehension at being called to a tremendous account for engaging



in so deep a play without any knowledge of the game. It is no excuse for presumptuous ignorance that it is directed by insolent passion. The poorest being that crawls on earth, contending to save itself from injustice and oppression, is an object respectable in the eyes of God and man. But I cannot conceive any existence under heaven (which in the depths of its wisdom tolerates all sorts of things) that is more truly odious and disgusting than an impotent, helpless creature, without civil wisdom or military skill, bloated with pride and arrogance, calling for battles which he is not to fight, and contending for a violent dominion which he can never exercise."

You have laughed over Burke's account of how all Lord Talbot's schemes for the reform of the King's household were dashed to pieces, because the turnspit of the King's kitchen was a Member of Parliament. You have often pondered over that miraculous passage in his speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts, describing the devastation of the Carnatic by Hyder Ali—a passage which Mr. John Morley says fills the young orator with the same emotions of enthusiasm, emulation, and despair that (according to the same authority) invariably torment the artist who first gazes on "The Madonna" at Dresden, or the figures of "Night" and "Dawn" at Florence. All these things you know, else are you mighty self-denying of your pleasures. But it is just possible you may have forgotten the following extract from one of Burke's farming letters to Arthur Young :

"One of the grand points in controversy (a controversy indeed chiefly carried on between practice and



speculation) is that of *deep ploughing*. In your last volume you seem, on the whole, rather against that practice, and have given several reasons for your judgment which deserve to be very well considered. In order to know how we ought to plough, we ought to know what end it is we propose to ourselves in that operation. The first and instrumental end is to divide the soil; the last and ultimate end, so far as regards the plants, is to facilitate the pushing of the blade upwards, and the shooting of the roots in all the inferior directions. There is further proposed a more ready admission of external influences—the rain, the sun, the air, charged with all those heterogeneous contents, some, possibly all, of which are necessary for the nourishment of the plants. By ploughing deep you answer these ends in a greater mass of the soil. This would seem in favour of deep ploughing as nothing else than accomplishing, in a more perfect manner, those very ends for which you are induced to plough at all. But doubts here arise only to be solved by experiment. First, is it quite certain that it is good for the ear and grain of farinaceous plants that their roots should spread and descend into the ground to the greatest possible distances and depths? Is there not some limit in this? We know that in timber, what makes one part flourish does not equally conduce to the benefit of all; and that which may be beneficial to the wood, does not equally contribute to the quantity and goodness of the fruit; and, *vice versâ*, that what increases the fruit largely is often far from serviceable to the tree. Secondly, is that looseness to great

depths, supposing it is useful to one of the species of plants, equally useful to all? Thirdly, though the external influences—the rain, the sun, the air—act undoubtedly a part, and a large part, in vegetation, does it follow that they are equally salutary in any quantities, at any depths? Or that, though it may be useful to diffuse one of these agents as extensively as may be in the earth, that therefore it will be equally useful to render the earth in the same degree pervious to all? It is a dangerous way of reasoning in physics, as well as morals, to conclude, because a given proportion of anything is advantageous, that the double will be quite as good, or that it will be good at all. Neither in the one nor the other is it always true that two and two make four.”

This is magnificent, but it is not farming, and you will easily believe that Burke’s attempts to till the soil were more costly than productive. Farming, if it is to pay, is a pursuit of small economies; and Burke was far too Asiatic, tropical, and splendid to have anything to do with small economies. His expenditure, like his rhetoric, was in the “grand style.” He belongs to Charles Lamb’s great race, “the men who borrow.” But indeed it was not so much that Burke borrowed as that men lent. Right-feeling men did not wait to be asked. Dr. Brocklesby, that good physician, whose name breathes like a benediction through the pages of the biographies of the best men of his time, who soothed Dr. Johnson’s last melancholy hours, and for whose supposed heterodoxy the dying man displayed so tender a solicitude, wrote to Burke, in the strain of a timid

suitor proposing for the hand of a proud heiress, to know whether Burke would be so good as to accept £1,000 at once, instead of waiting for the writer's death. Burke felt no hesitation in obliging so old a friend. Garrick, who, though fond of money, was as generous-hearted a fellow as ever brought down a house, lent Burke £1,000. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who has been reckoned stingy, by his will left Burke £2,000 and forgave him another £2,000 which he had lent him. The Marquis of Rockingham by his will directed all Burke's bonds held by him to be cancelled. They amounted to £30,000. Burke's patrimonial estate was sold by him for £4,000; and I have seen it stated that he had received altogether from family sources as much as £20,000. And yet he was always poor, and was glad at the last to accept pensions from the Crown in order that he might not leave his wife a beggar. This good lady survived her illustrious husband twelve years, and seemed as his widow to have had some success in paying his bills, for at her death all remaining demands were found to be discharged. For receiving this pension, Burke was assailed by the Duke of Bedford, a most pleasing act of ducal fatuity, since it enabled the pensioner, not bankrupt of his wit, to write a pamphlet, now a cherished classic, and introduce into it a few paragraphs about the House of Russell and the cognate subject of grants from the Crown. But enough of Burke's debts and difficulties, which I only mention because all through his life they were cast up against him. Had Burke been a moralist of the calibre of Charles James Fox, he

might have amassed a fortune large enough to keep up half a dozen Beaconsfields, by simply doing what all his predecessors in the office he held, including Fox's own father, the truly infamous first Lord Holland, had done—namely, by retaining for his own use the interest on all balances of the public money from time to time in his hands as Paymaster of the Forces. But Burke carried his passion for good government into actual practice, and, cutting down the emoluments of his office to a salary (a high one, no doubt), effected a saving to the country of some £25,000 a year, every farthing of which might have gone without remark into his own pocket.

Burke had no vices, save of style and temper ; nor was any of his expenditure a profligate squandering of money. It all went in giving employment or disseminating kindness. He sent the painter Barry to study art in Italy. He saved the poet Crabbe from starvation and despair, and thus secured to the country one who owns the unrivalled distinction of having been the favourite poet of the three greatest intellectual factors of the age (scientific men excepted)—Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and Cardinal Newman.

Next to Burke's debts, some of his companions and intimates did him harm and injured his consequence. His brother Richard, whose brogue we are given to understand was simply appalling, was a good-for-nothing, with a dilapidated reputation. Then there was another Mr. Burke, who was no relation, but none the less was always about, and to whom it was not safe to lend money. Burke's son, too, whose

death he mourned so pathetically, seems to have been a failure, and is described by a candid friend as a nauseating person. To have a decent following is important in politics.

A third reason must be given : Burke's judgment of men and things was often both wrong and violent. The story of Powell and Bembridge, two knaves in Burke's own office, whose cause he espoused, and whom he insisted on reinstating in the public service after they had been dismissed, and maintaining them there, in spite of all protests, till the one had the grace to cut his throat and the other was sentenced by the Queen's Bench to a term of imprisonment and a heavy fine, is too long to be told, though it makes interesting reading in the twenty-second volume of Howell's *State Trials*, where at the end of the report is to be found the following note :

"The proceedings against Messrs. Powell and Bembridge occasioned much animated discussion in the House of Commons, in which Mr. Burke warmly supported the accused. The compassion which on these and all other occasions was manifested by Mr. Burke for the sufferings of those public delinquents, the zeal with which he advocated their cause, and the eagerness with which he endeavoured to extenuate their criminality, have received severe reprehension, and in particular when contrasted with his subsequent conduct in the prosecution of Mr. Hastings."

The real reason for Burke's belief in Bembridge is, I think, to be found in the evidence Burke gave on his behalf at the trial before Lord Mansfield.

Bembridge had rendered Burke invaluable assistance in carrying out his reforms at the Paymaster's Office, and Burke was constitutionally unable to believe that a rogue could be on his side ; but, indeed, Burke was too apt to defend bad causes with a scream of passion, and a politician who screams is never likely to occupy a commanding place in the House of Commons. A last reason for Burke's exclusion from high office is to be found in his aversion to any measure of Parliamentary Reform. An ardent reformer like the Duke of Richmond, who was in favour of annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and payment of members, was not likely to wish to associate himself too closely with a politician who wept with emotion at the bare thought of depriving Old Sarum of parliamentary representation.

These reasons account for Burke's exclusion, and jealous as we naturally and properly are of genius being snubbed by mediocrity, my reading at all events does not justify me in blaming any one but the Fates for the circumstance that Burke was never a Secretary of State. And after all, does it now matter much what he was ?

It now only remains for me, drawing upon my stock of assurance, to essay the analysis of the essential elements of Burke's mental character, and I therefore at once proceed to say that it was Burke's peculiarity and his glory to apply the imagination of a poet of the first order to the facts and the business of life. There was a catholicity about his gaze. He knew how the whole world lived. Everything contributed to this : his vast desultory reading ; his



education, neither wholly academical nor entirely professional ; his long years of apprenticeship in the service of knowledge ; his wanderings up and down the country ; his vast conversational powers ; his enormous correspondence with all sorts of people ; his unfailing interest in all pursuits, trades, manufactures—all helped to keep before him, like motes dancing in a sunbeam, the huge organism of modern society, which requires for its existence and for its development the maintenance of credit and of order. Burke's imagination led him to look out over the whole land : the legislator devising new laws, the judge expounding and enforcing old ones, the merchant despatching his goods and extending his credit, the banker advancing the money of his customers upon the credit of the merchant, the frugal man slowly accumulating the store which is to support him in old age, the ancient institutions of Church and University with their seemly provisions for sound learning and true religion, the parson in his pulpit, the poet pondering his rhymes, the farmer eyeing his crops, the painter covering his canvases, the player educating the feelings. Burke saw all this with the fancy of a poet, and dwelt on it with the eye of a lover. But love is the parent of fear, and none knew better than Burke how thin is the lava layer between the costly fabric of society and the volcanic heats and destroying flames of anarchy. He trembled for the fair fame of all established things, and to his horror saw men, instead of covering the thin surface with the concrete, digging in it for abstractions, and asking fundamental questions about the origin



of society, and why one man should be born rich and another poor. Burke was no prating optimist : it was his very knowledge how much could be said against society that quickened his fears for it. There is no shallower criticism than that which accuses Burke in his later years of apostasy from so-called Liberal opinions. Burke was all his life through a passionate maintainer of the established order of things, and a ferocious hater of abstractions and metaphysical politics. The same ideas that explode like bombs through his diatribes against the French Revolution are to be found shining with a mild effulgence in the comparative calm of his earlier writings. I have often been struck with a resemblance, which I hope is not wholly fanciful, between the attitude of Burke's mind towards government and that of Cardinal Newman towards religion. Both these great men belong, by virtue of their imaginations, to the poetic order, and they both are to be found dwelling with amazing eloquence, detail, and wealth of illustration on the varied elements of society. Both seem as they write to have one hand on the pulse of the world, and to be for ever alive to the throb of its action ; and Burke, as he regarded humanity swarming like bees into and out of their hives of industry, is ever asking himself, How are these men to be saved from anarchy ? whilst Newman puts to himself the question, How are these men to be saved from atheism ? Both saw the perils of free inquiry divorced from practical affairs ?

“ Civil freedom,” says Burke, “ is not, as many

have endeavoured to persuade you, a thing that lies hid in the depth of abstruse science. It is a blessing and a benefit, not an abstract speculation, and all the just reasoning that can be upon it is of so coarse a texture as perfectly to suit the ordinary capacities of those who are to enjoy and of those who are to defend it."

"Tell men," says Cardinal Newman, "to gain notions of a Creator from His works, and if they were to set about it (which nobody does), they would be jaded and wearied by the labyrinth they were tracing; their minds would be gorged and surfeited by the logical operation. To most men argument makes the point in hand more doubtful and considerably less impressive. After all, man is not a reasoning animal, he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, actual animal."

Burke is fond of telling us that he is no lawyer, no antiquary, but a plain, practical man; and the Cardinal, in like manner, is ever insisting that he is no theologian—he leaves everything of that sort to the schools, whatever they may be, and simply deals with religion on its practical side as a benefit to mankind.

If either of these great men has been guilty of intellectual excesses, those of Burke may be attributed to his dread of anarchy, those of Newman to his dread of atheism. Neither of them was prepared to rest content with a scientific frontier, an imaginary line. So much did they dread their enemy, so alive were they to the terrible strength of some of his positions, that they could not agree to dispense with the protection afforded by the huge mountains

of prejudice and the ancient rivers of custom. The sincerity of either man can only be doubted by the bigot and the fool.

But Burke, apart from his fears, had a constitutional love for old things, simply because they were old. Anything mankind had ever worshipped, or venerated, or obeyed, was dear to him. I have already referred to his providing his Brahmins with a greenhouse for the purpose of their rites, which he watched from outside with great interest. One cannot fancy Cardinal Newman peeping through a window to see men worshipping false though ancient gods. Warren Hastings' high-handed dealings with the temples and time-honoured if scandalous customs of the Hindoos filled Burke with horror. So, too, he respected Quakers, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and all those whom he called Constitutional Dissenters. He has a fine passage somewhere about Rust, for with all his passion for good government he dearly loved a little rust. In this phase of character he reminds one not a little of another great writer—whose death literature has still reason to deplore—George Eliot ; who, in her love for old hedgerows and barns and crumbling moss-grown walls, was a writer after Burke's own heart, whose novels he would have sat up all night to devour ; for did he not deny with warmth Gibbon's statement that he had read all five volumes of *Evelina* in a day ? "The thing is impossible," cried Burke ; "they took me three days doing nothing else." Now, *Evelina* is a good novel, but *Silas Marner* is a better.

Wordsworth has been called the High Priest of Nature. Burke may be called the High Priest of Order—a lover of settled ways, of justice, peace, and security. His writings are a storehouse of wisdom, not the cheap shrewdness of the mere man of the world, but the noble, animating wisdom of one who has the poet's heart as well as the statesman's brain. Nobody is fit to govern this country who has not drunk deep at the springs of Burke. "Have you read your Burke?" is at least as sensible a question to put to a parliamentary candidate, as to ask him whether he is a total abstainer or a desperate drunkard. Something there may be about Burke to regret, and more to dispute; but that he loved justice and hated iniquity is certain, as also it is that for the most part he dwelt in the paths of purity, humanity, and good sense. May we be found adhering to them!

*Note* (1916).—When I wrote this I had read Burke, but not a great deal about him; and the more you read Burke in his Collected Works the greater becomes your admiration, but the more you read about him (including his uncollected speeches in Parliament) the harder it is to like him as much as I at least desire to do.

## THE TRANSMISSION OF DR. JOHNSON'S PERSONALITY.\*

(1898)

TO talk about Dr. Johnson has become a confirmed habit of the British race. Four years after Johnson's death, Boswell, writing to Bishop Percy, said, "I dined at Mr. Malone's on Wednesday with Mr. W. G. Hamilton, Mr. Flood, Mr. Windham, and Mr. Courtenay, and Mr. Hamilton observed very well what a proof it was of Johnson's merit that we had been talking of him all the afternoon." That was a hundred and ten years ago. We have been talking of him ever since. But what does this perpetual interest in Dr. Johnson prove? Why, nothing whatever, except that he was interesting. But this is a great deal; indeed, it is the whole matter for a man, a woman, or a book. When you come to think of it, it is our sole demand. Just now authors, an interesting class, are displaying a great deal of uneasiness about their goods: whether they are to be in one volume or in three, how the profits (if any) are to be divided, what their books should be about, and how far the laws of decency should be

\* From the *Johnson Club Papers*. Fisher Unwin, 1899.

observed in their construction. All this is very wearisome to the reader, who does not care whether a book be as long as *Clarissa Harlowe*, or as short as *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, provided only and always that it is interesting. And this is why Johnson is supreme, and why we go on talking about him long after we have exhausted the subject of our next-door neighbour.

Not many years ago, at our own annual gathering on the 13th of December, two of our guests were called upon (the practice is inhospitable) to say something. One was an Irish patriot, who had languished in jail during a now ancient *régime*, who on demanding from the chaplain to be provided with some book which was not the Bible, a collection of writings with which he was already, so he assured the chaplain, well acquainted, was supplied with Boswell, a book, it so chanced, he had never before read. He straightway, so he told us, forgot both his own and his country's woes. "How happily the days of Thalaba went by," and now, in the retrospect of life, his prison days wear the hues of enjoyment and delight. He has since ceased to be a patriot, but he remains a Boswellian.

The other guest was no less or more than the gigantic Bonnor, the Australian cricketer. He told us that until that evening he had never heard of Dr. Johnson. Thereupon somebody, I hope it was the patriot, and not a member of the club, was thoughtless enough to titter audibly. "Yes," added Bonnor, in heightened tones, and drawing himself proudly up, "and what is more, I come from a great country,

where you might ride a horse sixty miles a day for three months, and never meet anybody who had. But," so he proceeded, "I have heard of him now, and can only say that were I not Bonnor the cricketer, I would be Samuel Johnson." He sat down amidst applause, and the sorrowful conviction straightway seized hold of me that could the Doctor have obtained permission to revisit Fleet Street, his earthly heaven, that night, and had he come in amongst us, he would certainly have preferred both the compliment and the conversation of the cricketer to those of the critics he would have found at the table.

This, at all events, is what I mean by being interesting.

But how does it come about that we can all at this distance of time be so infatuated about a man who was not a great philosopher or poet, but only a miscellaneous writer? The answer must be, Johnson's is a transmitted personality.

To transmit personality is the secret of literature, as surely as the transmission of force is the main-spring of the universe. It is also the secret of religion.

To ask how it is done is to break your heart. Genius can do it sometimes, but what cannot genius do? Talent fails oftener than it succeeds. Mere sincerity of purpose is no good at all, unless accompanied by the rare gift of personal expression. A rascal like Benvenuto Cellini, or Casanova, an oddity like Borrow, is more likely to possess this gift than a saint; and this is why it is so much to be regretted



that we have fewer biographies of avowed rogues than of professed saints. But I will not pursue this branch of the subject further.

Johnson's, I repeat, is a transmitted personality. We know more about him than we do about anybody else in the wide world. Chronologically speaking, he might have been one of the four great-grandfathers of most of us. But what do any of you know about that *partie carrée* of your ancestors? What were their habits and customs? Did they wear tye-wigs or bob-wigs? What were their opinions? Can you tell me a single joke they ever made? Who were their intimate friends? What was their favourite dish? They lived and died. The truth is, we inhabit a world which has been emptied of our predecessors. Perhaps it is as well; it leaves the more room for us to occupy the stage during the short time we remain upon it.

But though we cannot acquire the secret; though we cannot deliberately learn how to transmit personality from one century to another, either our own personality or anybody else's, still, we may track the path and ask by what ways may personality be transmitted.

Dr. Johnson's case is in the main that of a personality transmitted to us by means of a great biography. He comes down to us through Boswell. To praise Boswell is superfluous. His method was studied, but at the same time original. He had always floating through his fuddled brain a great ideal of portraiture. Johnson himself, though he does not seem to have had any

confidence in his disciple, preferring to appoint the unclubable Hawkins his literary executor, nevertheless furnished Boswell with hints and valuable directions ; but the credit is all Boswell's, whose one aim was to make his man live. To do this he was prepared, like a true artist, to sacrifice everything. The proprieties did not exist for him. Then, what a free hand he had. Johnson left neither wife nor child. I don't suppose Black Frank, Johnson's servant and residuary legatee, ever read a line of the *Biography*. There was no daughter married to a country squire to put her pen through the fact that Johnson's father kept a bookstall. There was no grandson in the Church to water down the witticisms that have reverberated through the world. Boswell was tendered plenty of bad advice. He coarsely rejected it. Miss Hannah More besought his tenderness "for our virtuous and most revered departed friend, I beg you will mitigate some of his asperities." To which Boswell replied that he would not cut off his claws nor make a tiger a cat to please anybody.

The excellent Bishop Percy humbly requested Boswell that his (the Bishop's) name might be suppressed in the pages of the forthcoming *Biography*. To him Boswell—"As to suppressing your lordship's name, I will do anything to oblige your lordship but that very thing. I owe to the authenticity of my work to introduce as many names of eminent persons as I can. Believe me, my lord, you are not the only Bishop in the number of great men with which my pages are graced. *I am resolute as to this matter.*"

This sets me thinking of the many delightful pages of the great *Biography* in which the name of Percy occurs, in circumstances to which one can understand a Bishop objecting. So absurd a creature is man, particularly what Carlyle used to call shovel-hatted man.

How easily might the greatest of our biographies have been whittled away to nothing—to the dull ineptitudes with which we are all familiar, but for the glorious intrepidity of Boswell, who, if he did not practise the whole duty of man, at least performed the whole duty of a biographer.

As a means of transmitting personality memoirs rank high. Here we have Miss Burney's *Memoirs* to help us, and richly do they repay study, and Mrs. Thrale's marvellous collection of anecdotes, sparkling with womanly malice. Less deserving of notice are the volumes of Miss Anna Seward's correspondence, edited by Sir Walter Scott, who did not choose for their motto, as he fairly might have done, Sir Toby Belch's famous observation to that superlative fool Sir Andrew Aguecheek, "Let there be gall enough in thy ink though thou write with a goose-pen—no matter."

But whether we read the *Biography* or the *Memoirs*, it cannot escape our notice that Johnson's personality has been transmitted to us chiefly by a record of his *talk*.

It is a perilous foundation on which to build reputation, for it rests upon the frail testimony of human memory and human accuracy. How comes it that we are all well persuaded that Boswell and the

rest of the recorders did not invent Johnson's talk, but that it has come down to us bearing his veritable image and superscription? It is sometimes lightly said that had we records of other men's talk it would be as good as Johnson's. It is Boswells who are the real want. This I deny.

To be a great table-talker—and be it borne in mind a good deal of what is sometimes called table-talk is not table-talk at all, but extracts from commonplace books and carefully doctored notes—you must have *first* a *marked* and *constant* character, and, *second*, the gift of characteristic expression, so as to stamp all your utterances, however varied, however flatly contradictory one with another, with certain recognizable and ever-present marks or notes. The great Duke of Wellington possessed these qualifications, and consequently, though his conversation, as recorded by Lord Stanhope and others, is painfully restricted in its range of subject, and his character is lacking in charm, it is always interesting and sometimes remarkable. All the stories about Wellington are characteristic, and so are all the stories about Johnson. They all fit in with our conception of the character of the man about whom they are told, and thus strengthen and confirm that unity of impression which is essential if personality is to be transmitted down the ages.

The last story of Johnson I stumbled across is in a little book called *A Book for a Rainy Day*, written by an old gentleman called Smith, the author of a well-known life of Nollekens, the sculptor, a biography written with a vein of causticity some have

attributed to the fact that the biographer was not also a legatee. Boswell, thank Heaven, was above such considerations. He was not so much as mentioned in his great friend's will. The hated Hawkins was preferred to him; Hawkins, who wrote the authorized *Life of Johnson*, in which Boswell's name is only mentioned once, in a foot-note. But to return to Mr. Smith. In this book of his he records: "I once saw Johnson follow a sturdy thief who had stolen his handkerchief in Grosvenor Square, seize him by the collar with both hands, and shake him violently, after which he quickly let him loose, and then with his open hand gave him so powerful a smack on the face as to send him off the pavement staggering."

Now, in this anecdote of undoubted authenticity Johnson said nothing whatever, he fired off no epigram, thundered no abuse, and yet the story is as characteristic as his famous encounter with the Thames bargee.

You must have the character first and the talk comes afterwards. It is the old story; anybody can write like Shakespeare, if he has the mind.

But still, for this talk Johnson possessed great qualities. Vast and varied was his information on all kinds of subjects. He knew not only books, but a great deal about trades and manufactures, ways of existence, customs of business. He had been in all sorts of societies; kept every kind of company. He had fought the battle of life in a hand-to-hand encounter; had slept in garrets; had done hack work for booksellers; in short, had lived on four-

pence halfpenny a day. By the side of Johnson, Burke's knowledge of men and things was bookish and notional. He had a great range of fact. Next, he had a strong mind operating upon and in love with life. He never lost his curiosity in his fellow-men.

Then he had, when stirred by contact with his friends, or inflamed by the desire of contradiction, an amazingly ready wit and a magnificent vocabulary always ready for active service in the field. Add to this, extraordinary, and at times an almost divine tenderness, a deep-rooted affectionateness of disposition, united to a positively brutal aversion to any kind of exaggeration, particularly of feelings, and you get a combination rarely to be met with.

Another point must not be forgotten—ample leisure. The Dr. Johnson we know is the *post-pension* Doctor. Never, surely, before or since did three hundred pounds a year of public money yield (thanks mainly to Boswell) such a perpetual harvest for the public good. Not only did it keep the Doctor himself and provide a home for Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins and Miss Carmichael and Mr. Levett, but it has kept us all going ever since. Dr. Johnson after his pension, which he characteristically wished was twice as large, so that the newspaper dogs might make twice as much noise about it, was a thoroughly lazy fellow, who hated solitude with the terrible hatred of inherited melancholia. He loved to talk, and he hated to be alone. He said, "John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain



hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do."

But of course Wesley—a bright and glorious figure of the last century, to whom justice will some day be done when he gets from under the huge human organization which has so long lain heavily on the top of him—Wesley had on his eager mind and tender conscience the conversion of England, whose dark places he knew ; he could not stop all night exchanging intellectual hardihood with Johnson. Burke, too, had his plaguey politics, to keep Lord John Cavendish up to the proper pitch of an uncongenial enthusiasm, and all sorts of entanglements and even lawsuits of his own ; Thurlow had the woolsack ; Reynolds, his endless canvases and lady sitters ; Gibbon, his history ; Beauclerk, his assignations. One by one these eminent men would get up and steal away, but Johnson remained behind.

To sum this up, I say, it is to his character, *plus* his mental endowments, as exhibited by his talk, as recorded by Boswell and others, that the great world of Englishmen owe their Johnson. Such sayings as "Hervey was a vicious man, but he was very kind to me ; if you call a dog Hervey I should love him," throb through the centuries and excite in the mind a devotion akin to, but different from, religious feeling. The difference is occasioned by the entire absence of the note of sanctity. Johnson was a good man and a pious man, and a great observer of days ; but despite his bow to an archbishop, he never was in the way of becoming a saint. He lived fearfully,



and after a fashion prayerfully, but without assurance or exaltation.

Another mode of the transmission of personality is by letters. To be able to say what you mean in a letter is a useful accomplishment, but to say what you mean in such a way as at the same time to say what you are, is immortality. To publish a man's letters after his death is nowadays a familiar outrage ; they often make interesting volumes, seldom permanent additions to our literature. Lord Beaconsfield's letters to his sister are better than most, but of the letter writers of our own day Mrs. Carlyle stands proudly first—her stupendous lord being perhaps a bad second. Johnson's letters deserve more praise than they have received. To win that praise they only require a little more attention. Dr. Birkbeck Hill has collected them in two stately volumes, and they form an excellent appendix to his great edition of the Life. They are in every style, from the monumental to the utterly frivolous, but they are always delightful and ever characteristic. Their friendliness—an excellent quality in a letter—is perhaps their most prominent feature. It is hardly ever absent. Next to their friendliness comes their playfulness ; gaiety, indeed, there is none. At heart our beloved Doctor was full of gloom, but though he was never gay, he was frequently playful, and his letters abound with an innocent and touching mirth and an always affectionate fun. Some of his letters, those, for example, to Miss Porter after his mother's death, are, I verily believe, as moving as any ever written by man.

They reveal, too, a thoughtfulness and a noble generosity it would be impossible to surpass. I beseech you to read Dr. Johnson's letters ; they are full of literature, and with what is better than literature, life and character and comradeship. Had we nothing of Johnson but his letters, we should know him and love him.

Of his friend Sir Joshua's two most famous pictures I need not speak. One of them is the best known portrait in our English world. It has more than a trace of the vile melancholy the sitter inherited from his father, a melancholy which I fear turned some hours of every one of his days into blank dismay and wretchedness.

At last, by a route not I hope wearisomely circuitous, we reach Johnson's own books, his miscellaneous writings, his twelve volumes octavo, and the famous Dictionary.

It is sometimes lightly said, " Oh, nobody reads Johnson," just as it is said, " Nobody reads Richardson, nobody reads Sterne, nobody reads Byron " ! It is all nonsense ; there is always somebody reading Johnson, there is always somebody weeping over Richardson, there is always somebody sniggering over Sterne and chuckling over Byron. It is no disrespect to subsequent writers of prose or poetry to say that none of their productions do or ever can supply the place of the *Lives of the Poets*, of *Clarissa*, of the Elder Shandy and his brother Toby, or of *Don Juan*. Genius is never crowded out.

But I am willing enough to admit that Johnson was more than a writer of prose, more than a

biographer of poets ; he was himself a poet, and his poetry, as much as his prose, nay, more than his prose, because of its concentration, conveys to us the same dominating personality that bursts from the pages of Boswell like the Genii from the bottle in the Arabian story.

Of poetic freedom he had barely any. He knew but one way of writing poetry, namely, to chain together as much sound sense and sombre feeling as he could squeeze into the fetters of rhyming couplets, and then to clash those fetters loudly in your ear. This proceeding he called versification. It is simple, it is monotonous, but in the hands of Johnson it sometimes does not fall far short of the moral sublime. *London* and the *Vanity of Human Wishes* have never failed to excite the almost passionate admiration of succeeding poets. Ballantyne tells us how Scott avowed he had more pleasure in reading *London* and the *Vanity of Human Wishes* than any other poetical compositions he could mention, and adds, " I think I never saw his countenance more indicative of high admiration than while reciting them aloud."

Byron loved them ; they never failed to move Tennyson to cries of approval. There is, indeed, that about them, imitations, and often close imitations, of Juvenal though they be, which stamps them great. They contain lines which he could easily have bettered, verboriousities a child can point out ; but the effect they produce, on learned and simple, on old and young, is one and the same. We still hear the voice of Johnson, as surely as if he had declaimed the verses into a phonograph.

When you turn to them you are surprised to find how well you know them, what a hold they have got upon the English mind, how full of quotations they are, how immovably fixed in the glorious structure of English verse. Poor Sprat has perished despite his splendid tomb in the Abbey. Johnson has only a cracked stone and a worn-out inscription (for the Hercules in St. Paul's is unrecognizable), but he dwells where he would wish to dwell—in the loving memory of men. Johnson has in sober verity come down to us.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO DR. JOHNSON.

(1892)

**Y**OUR father begot you and your mother bore you. Honour them both. Husbands, be faithful to your wives. Wives, forgive your husband's unfaithfulness—once. No grown man who is dependent on the will, that is the whim, of another can be happy, and life without enjoyment is intolerable gloom. Therefore, as money means independence and enjoyment, get money, and having got it keep it. A spendthrift is a fool.

Clear your mind of cant, and never debauch your understanding. The only liberty worth turning out into the street for, is the liberty to do what you like in your own house and to say what you like in your own inn. All work is bondage.

Never get excited about causes you do not understand, or about people you have never seen. Keep Corsica out of your head.

Life is a struggle with either poverty or ennui; but it is better to be rich than to be poor. Death is a terrible thing to face. The man who says he is not afraid of it lies. Yet, as murderers have met it bravely on the scaffold, when the time comes so perhaps may I. In the meantime I am horribly

afraid. The future is dark. I should like more evidence of the immortality of the soul.

There is great solace in talk. We—you and I—are shipwrecked on a wave-swept rock. At any moment one or other of us, perhaps both, may be carried out to sea and lost. For the time being we have a modicum of light and warmth, of meat and drink. Let us constitute ourselves a club, stretch out our legs and talk. We have minds, memories, varied experiences, different opinions. Sir, let us talk, not as men who mock at fate, not with coarse speech or foul tongue, but with a manly mixture of the gloom that admits the inevitable, and the merriment that observes the incongruous. Thus talking we shall learn to love one another, not sentimentally but essentially.

Cultivate your mind, if you happen to have one. Care greatly for books and literature. Venerate poor scholars, but don't shout for "Wilkes and Liberty!" The one is a whoremonger, the other a flatulency.

If any tyrant prevents your goings out and your comings in, fill your pockets with large stones and kill him as he passes. Then go home and think no more about it. Never theorize about Revolution. Finally, pay your score at your club and your final debt to Nature generously and without casting the account too narrowly. Don't be a prig like Sir John Hawkins, or your own enemy like Bozzy, or a Whig like Burke, or a vile wretch like Rousseau, or pretend to be an atheist like Hume, but be a good fellow, and don't insist upon being remembered more than a month after you are dead.

## THE JOHNSONIAN LEGEND.

(1897)

THE ten handsome volumes which the indefatigable and unresting zeal of Dr. Birkbeck Hill, and the high spirit of the Clarendon Press, have edited, arranged, printed, and published for the benefit of the world and the propagation of the Gospel according to Dr. Johnson are pleasant things to look upon. I hope the enterprise has proved remunerative to those concerned, but I doubt it. The parsimony of the public in the matter of books is pitiful. The ordinary purse-carrying Englishman holds in his head a ready-reckoner or scale of charges by which he tests his purchases—so much for a dinner, so much for a bottle of champagne, so much for a trip to Paris, so much for a pair of gloves, and so much for a book. These ten volumes would cost him £4, 9s. 3d. “Whew! What a price for a book, and where are they to be put, and who is to dust them?” Idle questions! As for room, a bicycle takes more room than 1,000 books; and as for dust, it is a delusion. You should never dust books. There let it lie until the rare hour arrives when you want to read a particular volume; then warily approach it with a snow-white napkin, take it down



from its shelf, and, withdrawing to some back apartment, proceed to cleanse the tome. Dr. Johnson adopted other methods. Every now and again he drew on huge gloves, such as those once worn by hedgers and ditchers, and then, clutching folios and octavos, he banged and buffeted them together until he was enveloped in a cloud of dust. This violent exercise over, the good doctor restored the volumes, all battered and bruised, to their places, where, of course, the dust resettled itself as speedily as possible.

Dr. Johnson could make books better than anybody, but his notions of dusting them were primitive and erroneous. But the room and the dust are mere subterfuges. The truth is, there is a disinclination to pay £4, 9s. 3d. for the ten volumes containing the complete Johnsonian legend. To quarrel with the public is idiotic and most un-Johnsonian. "Depend upon it, sir," said the sage, "every state of society is as luxurious as it can be." We all, a handful of misers excepted, spend more money than we can afford upon luxuries, but what those luxuries are to be is largely determined for us by the fashions of our time. If we do not buy these ten volumes, it is not because we would not like to have them, but because we want the money they cost for something we want more. As for dictating to men how they are to spend their money, it were both a folly and an impertinence.

These ten volumes ended Dr. Hill's labours as an editor of *Johnson's Life and Personalia* but did not leave him free. He had set his mind on an edition of the *Lives of the Poets*. This, to the regret of all

who knew him either personally or as a Johnsonian, he did not live to see through the press. But it is soon to appear, and will be a storehouse of anecdote and a miracle of cross-references. A poet who has been dead a century or two is amazing good company—at least, he never fails to be so when Johnson tells us as much of his story as he can remember without undue research, with that irony of his, that vast composure, that humorous perception of the greatness and the littleness of human life, that make the brief records of a Sprat, a Walsh, and a Fenton so divinely entertaining. It is an immense testimony to the healthiness of the Johnsonian atmosphere that Dr. Hill, who breathed it almost exclusively for a quarter of a century and upwards, showed no symptoms either of moral deterioration or physical exhaustion. His appetite to the end was as keen as ever, nor was his temper obviously the worse. The task never became a toil, not even a tease. “You have but two subjects,” said Johnson to Boswell: “yourself and myself. I am sick of both.” Johnson hated to be talked about, or to have it noticed what he ate or what he had on. For a hundred years now last past he has been more talked about and noticed than anybody else. But Dr. Hill never grew sick of Dr. Johnson.

The *Johnsonian Miscellanies*\* open with the *Prayers and Meditations*, first published by the Rev. Dr. Strahan in 1785. Strahan was the Vicar of Islington, and into his hands at an early hour one morning Dr. Johnson, then approaching his last days,

\* Two volumes. Oxford Clarendon Press, 1897.

put the papers, "with instructions for committing them to the press and with a promise to prepare a sketch of his own life to accompany them." This promise the doctor was not able to keep, and shortly after his death his reverend friend published the papers just as they were put into his hands. One wonders he had the heart to do it, but the clerical mind is sometimes strangely insensitive to the privacy of thought. But, as in the case of most indelicate acts, you cannot but be glad the thing was done. The original manuscript is at Pembroke College, Oxford. In these *Prayers and Meditations* we see an awful figure. The solitary Johnson, perturbed, tortured, oppressed, in distress of body and of mind, full of alarms for the future both in this world and the next, teased by importunate and perplexing thoughts, harassed by morbid infirmities, vexed by idle yet constantly recurring scruples, with an inherited melancholy and a threatened sanity, is a gloomy and even a terrible picture, and forms a striking contrast to the social hero, the triumphant dialectician of Boswell, Mrs. Thrale, and Madame D'Arblay. Yet it is relieved by its inherent humanity, its fellowship and feeling. Dr. Johnson's piety is delightfully full of human nature—far too full to please the poet Cowper, who wrote of the *Prayers and Meditations* as follows :

"If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder that you were so little edified by Johnson's Journal. It is even more ridiculous than was poor Rutty's of flatulent memory. The portion of it given us in this day's paper contains not one

sentiment worth one farthing, except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think that to pray for his dead wife and to pinch himself with Church fasts had been almost the whole of his religion."

It were hateful to pit one man's religion against another's, but it is only fair to Dr. Johnson's religion to remember that, odd compound as it was, it saw him through the long struggle of life, and enabled him to meet the death he so honestly feared like a man and a Christian. The *Prayers and Meditations* may not be an edifying book in Cowper's sense of the word; there is nothing triumphant about it; it is full of infirmities and even absurdities; but, for all that, it contains more piety than 10,000 religious biographies. Nor must the evidence it contains of weakness be exaggerated. Beset with infirmities, a lazy dog, as he often declared himself to be, he yet managed to do a thing or two. Here, for example, is an entry:—

"29, EASTER EVE (1777).

"I rose and again prayed with reference to my departed wife. I neither read nor went to church, yet can scarcely tell how I have been hindered. I treated with booksellers on a bargain, but the time was not long."

Too long, perhaps, for Johnson's piety, but short enough to enable the booksellers to make an uncommon good bargain for the *Lives of the Poets*. "As to the terms," writes Mr. Dilly, "it was left

entirely to the doctor to name his own ; he mentioned 200 guineas ; it was immediately agreed to." The business-like Malone makes the following observation on the transaction : " Had he asked 1,000, or even 1,500, guineas the booksellers, who knew the value of his name, would doubtless have readily given it." Dr. Johnson, though the son of a bookseller, was the least tradesmanlike of authors. The bargain was bad, but the book was good.

A year later we find this record :

" MONDAY, April 20 (1778).

" After a good night, as I am forced to reckon, I rose seasonably and prayed, using the collect for yesterday. In reviewing my time from Easter, 1777, I find a very melancholy and shameful blank. So little has been done that days and months are without any trace. My health has, indeed, been very much interrupted. My nights have been commonly not only restless but painful and fatiguing. . . . I have written a little of the *Lives of the Poets*, I think, with all my usual vigour. I have made sermons, perhaps, as readily as formerly. My memory is less faithful in retaining names, and, I am afraid, in retaining occurrences. Of this vacillation and vagrancy of mind I impute a great part to a fortuitous and unsettled life, and therefore purpose to spend my life with more method.

" This year the 28th of March passed away without memorial. Poor Tetty, whatever were our faults and failings, we loved each other. I did not forget thee yesterday. Couldst thou have lived !

I am now, with the help of God, to begin a new life."

Dr. Hill prints an interesting letter of Mr. Jowett's, in which occur the following observations :

" It is a curious question whether Boswell has unconsciously misrepresented Johnson in any respect. I think, judging from the materials, which are supplied chiefly by himself, that in one respect he has. He has represented him more as a sage and philosopher in his conduct as well as his conversation than he really was, and less as a rollicking ' King of Society.' The gravity of Johnson's own writings tends to confirm this, as I suspect, erroneous impression. His religion was fitful and intermittent ; and when once the ice was broken he enjoyed Jack Wilkes, though he refused to shake hands with Hume. I was much struck with a remark of Sir John Hawkins (excuse me if I have mentioned this to you before) : ' He was the most humorous man I ever knew.' "

Mr. Jowett's letter raises some nice points—the Wilkes and Hume point, for example. Dr. Johnson hated both blasphemy and bawd, but he hated blasphemy most. Mr. Jowett shared the doctor's antipathies, but very likely hated bawd more than he did blasphemy. But, as I have already said, the point is a nice one. To crack jokes with Wilkes at the expense of Boswell and the Scotch seems to me a very different thing from shaking hands with Hume. But, indeed, it is absurd to overlook either Johnson's melancholy piety or his abounding humour and love of fun and nonsense. His *Prayers and*



*Meditations* are full of the one, Boswell and Mrs. Thrale and Madame D'Arblay are full of the other. Boswell's *Johnson* has superseded the "authorized biography" by Sir John Hawkins, and Dr. Hill did well to include in these *Miscellanies* Hawkins' inimitable description of the memorable banquet given at the Devil Tavern, near Temple Bar, in the spring of 1751, to celebrate the publication of Mrs. Charlotte Lennox's first novel. What delightful revelry! what innocent mirth! prolonged though it was till long after dawn. Poor Mrs. Lennox died in distress in 1804, at the age of eighty-three. Could Johnson but have lived he would have lent her his helping hand. He was no fair-weather friend, but shares with Charles Lamb the honour of being able to unite narrow means and splendid munificence.

I must end with an anecdote :

"Henderson asked the doctor's opinion of *Dido* and its author. 'Sir,' said Dr. Johnson, 'I never did the man an injury. Yet he would read his tragedy to me.'"

## BOSWELL AS BIOGRAPHER.

(1898)

BOSWELL'S position in English literature cannot be disputed, nor can he ever be displaced from it. He has written our greatest biography. That is all. Theorize about it as much as you like, account for it how you may, the fact remains. "Alone I did it." There has been plenty of theorizing. Lord Macaulay took the subject in hand and tossed it up and down for half a dozen pages with a gusto that drove home to many minds the conviction, the strange conviction, that our greatest biography was written by one of the very smallest men that ever lived, "a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect"—by a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb; by one "who, if he had not been a great fool, would never have been a great writer." So far Macaulay, *anno Domini* 1831, in the vigorous pages of the *Edinburgh Review*. A year later appears in *Fraser's Magazine* another theory by another hand, not then famous, Mr. Thomas Carlyle. I own to an inordinate affection for Mr. Carlyle as "literary critic." As philosopher and sage, he has served our turn. We have had the fortune, good or bad, to outlive him; and our sad experience is that death

makes a mighty difference to all but the very greatest. The sight of the author of *Sartor Resartus* in a Chelsea omnibus, the sound of Dr. Newman's voice preaching to a small congregation in Birmingham, kept alive in our minds the vision of their greatness—it seemed then as if that greatness could know no limit ; but no sooner had they gone away, than somehow or other one became conscious of some deficiency in their intellectual positions—the tide of human thought rushed visibly by them, and it became plain that to no other generation would either of these men be what they had been to their own. But Mr. Carlyle as literary critic has a tenacious grasp, and Boswell was a subject made for his hand. “ Your Scottish laird, says an English naturalist of those days, may be defined as the hungriest and vainest of all bipeds yet known.” Carlyle knew the type well enough. His general description of Boswell is savage :

“ Boswell was a person whose mean or bad qualities lay open to the general eye, visible, palpable to the dullest. His good qualities, again, belonged not to the time he lived in ; were far from common then ; indeed, in such a degree were almost unexampled ; not recognizable, therefore, by every one ; nay, apt even, so strange had they grown, to be confounded with the very vices they lay contiguous to and had sprung out of. That he was a wine-bibber and good liver, gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character, is undeniable enough. That he was vain, heedless, a babbler, had much of the sycophant,

alternating with the braggadocio, curiously spiced, too, with an all-pervading dash of the coxcomb ; that he gloried much when the tailor by a court suit had made a new man of him ; that he appeared at the Shakespeare Jubilee with a riband imprinted ' Corsica Boswell ' round his hat, and, in short, if you will, lived no day of his life without saying and doing more than one pretentious ineptitude, all this unhappily is evident as the sun at noon. The very look of Boswell seems to have signified so much. In that cocked nose, cocked partly in triumph over his weaker fellow-creatures, partly to snuff up the smell of coming pleasure and scent it from afar, in those big cheeks, hanging like half-filled wine-skins, still able to contain more, in that coarsely-protruded shelf mouth, that fat dew-lapped chin ; in all this who sees not sensuality, pretension, boisterous imbecility enough ? The underpart of Boswell's face is of a low, almost brutish character."

This is character-painting with a vengeance. Portrait of a Scotch laird by the son of a Scotch peasant. Carlyle's Boswell seems the very man. If so, Carlyle's paradox seems as great as Macaulay's, for though Carlyle does not call Boswell a great fool in plain set terms, he goes very near it. But he keeps open a door through which he effects his escape. Carlyle sees in Bozzy " the old reverent feeling of discipleship, in a word, hero-worship."

" How the babbling Bozzy, inspired only by love and the recognition and vision which love can lend, epitomizes nightly the words of Wisdom, the deeds and aspects of Wisdom, and so, little by little, uncon-

sciously works together for us a whole 'Johnsoniad'—a more free, perfect, sunlit, and spirit-speaking likeness than for many centuries has been drawn by man of man."

This I think is overdrawn. That Boswell loved Johnson, God forbid I should deny. But that he was inspired only by love to write his life, I gravely question. Boswell was, as Carlyle has said, a greedy man—and especially was he greedy of fame—and he saw in his revered friend a splendid subject for artistic biographic treatment. Here is where both Macaulay and Carlyle are, as I suggest, wrong. Boswell was a fool, but only in the sense in which hundreds of great artists have been fools; on his own lines, and across his own bit of country, he was no fool. He did not accidentally stumble across success, but he deliberately aimed at what he hit. Read his preface and you will discover his method. He was as much an artist as either of his two famous critics. Where Carlyle goes astray is in attributing to discipleship what was mainly due to a dramatic sense—the shaping desire to create a character. However, theories are no great matter.

Our means of knowledge of James Boswell are derived mainly from himself; he is his own incriminator. In addition to the life, there is the Corsican tour, the Hebrides tour, the letters to Erskine and to Temple, and a few insignificant occasional publications in the shape of letters to the people of Scotland, etc. With these before him it is impossible for any biographer to approach Bozzy in a devotional attitude; he was all Carlyle calls him. Our sym-

pathies are with his father, who despised him, and with his son, who was ashamed of him. It is indeed strange to think of him staggering, like the drunkard he was, between these two respectable and even stately figures—the Senator of the Court of Justice and the courtly scholar and antiquary. And yet it is to the drunkard humanity is debtor. Respectability is not everything.

Boswell had many literary projects and ambitions, and never intended to be known merely as the biographer of Johnson, who played a smaller part in Boswell's life than the crowning success of the great biography leads us to suppose. It is a pleasant occupation to search through the Johnsonian Legend to try to discover how many times Boswell saw Johnson. Do the sum for yourself, gentle reader.

As inveterate book-hunter, I confess to a great fancy to lay hands on Boswell's *Dorando: A Spanish Tale*, a shilling book published in Edinburgh during the progress of the once famous Douglas case, and ordered to be suppressed as contempt of court after it had been through three editions. It is said, probably hastily, that no copy is known to exist—a dreary fate which, according to Lord Macaulay, might have attended upon the *Life of Johnson* had the copyright of that work become the property of Boswell's son, who hated to hear it mentioned. It is not, however, very easy to get rid of any book once it is published, and I do not despair of reading *Dorando* before I die, particularly as I have just heard there is a copy in one of the two great libraries in Edinburgh.



## ARTHUR YOUNG.

(1900)

THE name of Arthur Young is a familiar one to all readers of that history which begins with the rumblings of the French Revolution. Thousands of us learnt to be interested in him as the "good Arthur," "the excellent Arthur," of Thomas Carlyle, a writer who had the art of making not only his own narrative, but the sources of it, attractive. Even "Carrion-Heath," in the famous introductory chapter to the *Cromwell*, is invested with a kind of charm, whilst in the stormy firmament of the *French Revolution* the star of Arthur Young twinkles with a mild effulgency. The autobiography of such a man could hardly fail to be interesting.\* The "good Arthur" was born in 1741, the younger son of a small "squarson" who inherited from his father the manor of Bradfield Combust, in Suffolk, but held the living of Thames Ditton. Here he made the acquaintance of the Onslow family, and Speaker Onslow was one of Arthur's godfathers. The Rev. Dr. Young died in 1759, much in debt. The Bradfield property had

\* *The Autobiography of Arthur Young. Edited by M. Betham Edwards.* Smith, Elder and Co.

been settled for life on his wife, who had brought her husband some fortune, and to the manor house she retired to economize.

Arthur's education had been muddled ; and an attempt to make a merchant of him having fallen through, he found himself, on his father's death, aged eighteen, "without education, profession, or employment," and his whole fortune, during his mother's life, consisting of a copyhold farm of 20 acres, producing as many pounds. In these circumstances, to think of literature was well-nigh inevitable, and, in 1762, the autobiography tells us :

"I set on foot a periodical publication, entitled the *Universal Museum*, which came out monthly, printed with glorious imprudence on my own account. I waited on Dr. Johnson, who was sitting by the fire so half-dressed and slovenly a figure as to make me stare at him. I stated my plan, and begged that he would favour me with a paper once a month, offering at the same time any remuneration that he might name."

Here we see dimly prefigured a modern editor prematurely soliciting the support of Great Names. But the Cham of literature, himself the son of a bookseller, would have none of it.

" 'No, sir,' he replied ; 'such a work would be sure to fail if the booksellers have not the property, and you will lose a great deal of money by it.'

" 'Certainly, sir,' I said, 'if I am not fortunate enough to induce authors of real talent to contribute.'

" 'No, sir, you are mistaken ; such authors will

not support such a work, nor will you persuade them to write in it. You will purchase disappointment by the loss of your money, and I advise you by all means to give up the plan.'

"Somebody was introduced, and I took my leave."

The *Universal Museum*, none the less, appeared, but after five numbers Young "procured a meeting of ten or a dozen booksellers, and had the luck and address to persuade them to take the whole scheme upon themselves." He then calmly adds, "I believe no success ever attended it." It was, indeed, 100 years before its time. Literature abandoned, Young took one of his mother's farms. "I had no more idea of farming than of physic or divinity," nor did he, man of European reputation as a farmer though he soon became, ever make farming pay. He had an itching pen, and after four years' farming (1763-1766) he published the result of his experience. Never, surely, before has an author spoken of his first-born as in the autobiography Young speaks of this publication :

"And the circumstance which perhaps of all others in my life I most deeply regretted and considered as a sin of the blackest dye was the publishing of my experience during these four years, which, speaking as a farmer, was nothing but ignorance, folly, presumption, and rascality."

None the less, it was writing this rascally book that seems to have given him the idea of those agricultural tours which were to make his name famous throughout the world. His Southern tour was in 1767, his Northern in 1768, and his Eastern in 1770.

The subject he specially illuminated in these epoch-making books was the rotation of crops, though he occasionally diverged upon deep-ploughing and kindred themes. The tours excited, for the first time, the agricultural spirit of Great Britain, and their author almost at once became a celebrated man.

In 1765 Young married the wrong woman, and started upon a career of profound matrimonial discomfort, and even misery ; a blunt, truthful writer, he makes no bones about it. It was an unhappy marriage from its beginning in 1765 to its end in 1815. Young himself, though by no means vivacious in this autobiography, where he frankly complains of himself as having no more wit than a fig, was a very popular person with all classes and both sexes. He was an enormous diner-out, and his authority as an agriculturist, united to his undeniable charm as a companion, threw open to him all the great places in the country. But his finances were a perpetual trouble. On carrot seeds and cabbages he was an authority, but from 1766-1775 his income never exceeded £300 a year. He had an excellent mother, whom he dearly loved, and who with the characteristic bluntness of the family bade him think less about carrots and more about his Creator. "You may call all this rubbish if you please, but a time will come when you will be convinced whose notions are rubbish, yours or mine." And the old lady was right, as mothers so frequently turn out to be. In 1778 Young went over to Ireland as agent to Lord Kingsborough. He got £500 down, and was to have an annual salary of £500 and

a house. Young soon got to work, and became anxious to persuade his employer to let his lands direct to the occupying cottar, and so get rid of the middlemen. This did not suit a certain Major Thornhill, a relative and leaseholder, and there-upon a pretty plot was hatched. Lady K. had a Catholic governess, a Miss Crosby, upon whom it was thought my lord occasionally cast the eye of partiality, whilst Arthur himself got on very well with her ladyship, who was heard to pronounce him to be "one of the most lively, agreeable fellows." Out of these materials the Major and his helpmeet concocted a double plot—namely, to make the lord jealous of the steward, and the lady jealous of the governess, and to cause both lord and lady respectively to believe that the steward was deeply engaged both in abetting the amour of the lord and the governess, and in prosecuting his own amour with the lady. The result was that both governess and steward got notice to quit; but—and this is very Irish—both went off with life annuities, the governess with one of £50 per annum, and the steward with one of £72, and, what is still more odd, we find Young at the end of his life in receipt of his annuity. They were an expensive couple, these two.

In 1780 Young published his *Irish Tour*, which was immediately successful and popular in both kingdoms. In it he attacked the bounty paid on the land-carriage of corn to Dublin. The bounty was, in the session of Parliament next after the publication of Young's book, reduced by one-half, and soon given up entirely. Young maintains that this

saved Ireland £80,000 a year. Nobody seems to have said "Thank you."

In May, 1783, was born the child "Bobbin," whose death, fourteen years later, was to change the current of Young's life. The following year Arthur Young paid his first visit to France, confining himself, however, to Calais and its neighbourhood, and in the same year his mother died, and, by an arrangement with his eldest brother, "this patch of landed property," as Young calls Bradfield, descended upon him. His first famous journey in France was made between May and November, 1787, and cost the marvellously small sum of £118, 15s. 2d. His second and third French journeys were made in July, 1788, and in June, 1789. The third was the longest, and extended into 1790. Three years later Young was appointed, by Pitt, Secretary of the then Board of Agriculture. A melancholy account is given by Young of a visit he paid Burke at Gregory's in 1796. Young drove there in the chariot of his fussy chief, Sir John Sinclair, to discover what Burke's intentions might be as to an intended publication of his relating to the price of labour. The account, which occupies four pages, is too long for quotation. It concludes thus :

"I am glad once more to have seen and conversed with the man who I hold to possess the greatest and most brilliant gifts of any penman of the age in which he lived. Whose conversation has often fascinated me, whose eloquence has charmed ; whose writings have delighted and instructed the world ; whose name will without question descend to the



latest posterity. But to behold so great a genius, so deepened with melancholy, stooping with infirmity of body, feeling the anguish of a lacerated mind, and sinking to the grave under accumulated misery—to see all this in a character I venerate, apparently without resource or comfort, wounded every feeling of my soul, and I left him the next day almost as low-spirited as himself.”

But Young himself was soon to pass into the same Valley of the Shadow, not so much of Death as of Joyless Life. His beloved and idolized Bobbin died on July 14, 1797. She seems to have been a wise little maiden, to whom her father wrote most affectionate letters, full of rather unsuitable details, political and financial and otherwise, and not scrupling to speak of the child's mother in a disagreeable manner. Bobbin replies with delightful composure to these worrying letters :

“ I have just got six of the most beautiful little rabbits you ever saw ; they skip about so prettily you can't think, and I shall have some more in a few weeks. Having had so much physic, I am right down tired of it. I take it still twice a day—my appetite is better. What can you mind politics so for ? I don't think about them.—Well, good-bye, and believe me, dear papa, your dutiful daughter.”

In the vestry of Bradfield Church, Suffolk, there is a tablet on which Bobbin's last words are inscribed : “ Pray for me, papa. Amen.”

After poor little Bobbin's death, it happened to Arthur Young even as his mother foretold. Carrots and crops and farming tours hastily retreat, and we

find the eminent agriculturist busying himself, with the same seriousness and good faith he had devoted to the rotation of the crops, with the sermons and treatises of Clarke and Jortin and Secker and Tillotson, etc., and all to discover what had become of his dear little Bobbin. His outlook upon the world was changed—the great parties at Petworth, at Euston, at Woburn struck him differently; the huge irreligion of the world filled him as for the first time with amazement and horror:

“How few years are passed since I should have pushed on eagerly to Woburn! This time twelve months I dined with the Duke on Sunday—the party not very numerous, but chiefly of rank—the entertainment more splendid than usual there. He expects me to-day, but I have more pleasure in resting, going twice to church, and eating a morsel of cold lamb at a very humble inn, than partaking of gaiety and dissipation at a great table which might as well be spread for a company of heathens as English lords and men of fashion.”

It is all mighty fine calling this religious hypochondria and depression of spirits. It is one of the facts of life. Young stuck to his post, and did his work, and quarrelled with his wife to the end, or nearly so. He cannot have been so lively and agreeable a companion as of old, for we find him in November, 1806, at Euston, endeavouring to impress on the Duke of Grafton that by his tenets he had placed himself entirely under the covenant of works, and that he must be tried for them, and that “I would not be in such a situation for ten thousand worlds.

He was mild and more patient than I expected." Perhaps, after all, Carlyle was not so far wrong when he praised our aristocracy for their "politeness." In 1808 Young became blind. In 1815 his wife died. In 1820 he died himself, leaving behind him seven packets of manuscript and twelve folio volumes of correspondence.

Young's great work, *Travels during the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789, undertaken more particularly with a View of Ascertaining the Cultivation, Wealth, Resources, and National Prosperity of the Kingdom of France*, published in 1792, is one of those books which will always be a great favourite with somebody. It will outlive eloquence and outstay philosophy. It contains some famous passages.

## THOMAS PAINE.

(1900)

PROVERBS are said to be but half-truths, but "give a dog a bad name and hang him" is a saying almost as veracious as it is felicitous ; and to no one can it possibly be applied with greater force than to Thomas Paine, the rebellious staymaker, the bankrupt tobacconist, the amazing author of *Common-sense*, *The Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason*.

Until recently Tom Paine lay without the pale of toleration. No circle of liberality was constructed wide enough to include him. Even the scouted Unitarian scouted Thomas. He was "the infamous Paine," "the vulgar atheist." Whenever mentioned in pious discourse it was but to be waved on one side as thus : "No one of my hearers is likely to be led astray by the scurrilous blasphemies of Paine."

I can well remember when an asserted intimacy with the writings of Paine marked a man from his fellows and invested him in children's minds with a horrid fascination. The writings themselves were only to be seen in bookshops of evil reputation, and, when hastily turned over with furtive glances, proved to be printed in small type and on villainous paper. For a boy to have bought them and taken them

inside a decent home would have been to run the risk of fierce wrath in this life and the threat of it in the next. If ever there was a hung dog, his name was Tom Paine. Hung dogs have their uses. The poet Coleridge, a very close observer of his times, frequently dwelt on the good luck which rendered Paine, and other English friends of the French Revolution, so obnoxious to our orthodox mob. The mob thought Paine was an atheist and burnt him in effigy as such, and cheered good King George. Had the mob made the discovery that Paine was a convinced theist the parts might have been reversed.

Now, however, that Paine has done us this good turn we may without danger unhang him. A life of Thomas Paine, in two portly and well-printed volumes, with gilt tops, wide margins, spare leaves at the end, and all the other signs and tokens of literary respectability, has lately appeared. No President, no Prime Minister—nay, no Bishop or Moderator—need hope to have his memoirs printed in better style than are these of Thomas Paine, by Mr. Moncure D. Conway. Were any additional proof required of the complete resuscitation of Paine's reputation, it might be found in the fact that his life *is* in two volumes, though it would have been far better told in one.

Mr. Conway believes implicitly in Paine—not merely in his virtue and intelligence, but that he was a truly great man, who played a great part in human affairs. He will no more admit that Paine was a busybody, inflated with conceit and with a strong dash of insolence, than he will that Thomas

was a drunkard. That Paine's speech was undoubtedly plain and his nose undeniably red is as far as Mr. Conway will go. If we are to follow the biographer the whole way, we must not only unhang the dog, but give him sepulture amongst the sceptred Sovereigns who rule us from their urns.

Thomas Paine was born at Thetford, in Norfolk, in January, 1737, and sailed for America in 1774, then being thirty-seven years of age. Up to this date he was a rank failure. His trade was stay-making, but he had tried his hand at many things. He was twice an Excise officer, but was twice dismissed the service, the first time for falsely pretending to have made certain inspections which, in fact, he had not made, and the second time for carrying on business in an excisable article—tobacco, to wit—without the leave of the Board. Paine had married the tobacconist's business, but neither the marriage nor the business prospered; the second was sold by auction, and the first terminated by mutual consent.

Mr. Conway labours over these early days of his hero very much, but he can make nothing of them. Paine was an Excise officer at Lewes, where, so Mr. Conway reminds us, "seven centuries before Paine opened his office in Lewes, came Harold's son, possibly to take charge of the Excise as established by Edward the Confessor, just deceased." This device of biographers is a little stale. The Confessor was guiltless of the Excise.

Paine's going to America was due to Benjamin Franklin, who made Paine's acquaintance in London, and, having the wit to see his ability, recom-



mended him "as a clerk or assistant-tutor in a school or assistant-surveyor." Thus armed, Paine made his appearance in Philadelphia, where he at once obtained employment as editor of an intended periodical called the *Pennsylvanian Magazine or American Museum*, the first number of which appeared in January, 1775. Never was anything luckier. Paine was, without knowing it, a born journalist. His capacity for writing on the spur of the moment was endless, and his delight in doing so boundless. He had no difficulty for "copy," though in those days contributors were few. He needed no contributors. He was "Atlanticus"; he was "Vox Populi"; he was "Æsop." The unsigned articles were also mostly his. Having at last, after many adventures and false starts, found his vocation, Paine stuck to it. He spent the rest of his days with a pen in his hand, scribbling his advice and obtruding his counsel on men and nations. Both were usually of excellent quality.

Paine was also happy in the moment of his arrival in America. The War of Independence was imminent, and in April, 1775, occurred "the massacre of Lexington." The Colonists were angry, but puzzled. They hardly knew what they wanted. They lacked a definite opinion to entertain and a cry to asseverate. Paine had no doubts. He hated British institutions with all the hatred of a civil servant who has had "the sack."

In January, 1776, he published his pamphlet *Common-sense*, which must be ranked with the most famous pamphlets ever written. It is difficult to wade through now, but even *The Conduct of the Allies*

is not easy reading, and yet between Paine and Swift there is a great gulf fixed. The keynote of *Common-sense* was separation once and for ever, and the establishment of a great Republic of the West. It hit between wind and water, had a great sale, and made its author a personage and, in his own opinion, a divinity.

Paine now became the penman of the rebels. His series of manifestoes, entitled *The Crisis*, were widely read and carried healing on their wings, and in 1777 he was elected Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. Charles Lamb once declared that Rousseau was a good enough Jesus Christ for the French, and he was capable of declaring Tom Paine a good enough Milton for the Yankees. However that may be, Paine was an indefatigable and useful public servant. He was a bad gauger for King George, but he was an admirable scribe for a revolution conducted on constitutional principles.

To follow his history through the war would be tedious. What Washington and Jefferson really thought of him we shall never know. He was never mercenary, but his pride was wounded that so little recognition of his astounding services was forthcoming. The ingratitude of Kings was a commonplace; the ingratitude of peoples an unpleasing novelty. But Washington bestirred himself at last, and Paine was voted an estate of 277 acres, more or less, and a sum of money. This was in 1784.

Three years afterwards Thomas visited England, where he kept good company and was very usefully employed engineering, for which excellent pursuit

he would appear to have had great natural aptitude. Blackfriars Bridge had just tumbled down, and it was Paine's laudable ambition to build its successor in iron. But the Bastille fell down as well as Blackfriars Bridge, and was too much for Paine. As Mr. Conway beautifully puts it : " But again the Cause arose before him ; he must part from all—patent interests, literary leisure, fine society—and take the hand of Liberty undowered, but as yet unstained. He must beat his bridge-iron into a key that shall unlock the British Bastille, whose walls he sees steadily closing around the people." " Miching mallecho—this means mischief ; " and so it proved.

Burke is responsible for the *Rights of Man*. This splendid sentimentalist published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in November, 1790. Paine immediately sat down in the Angel, Islington, and began his reply. He was not unqualified to answer Burke ; he had fought a good fight between the years 1775 and 1784. Mr. Conway has some ground for his epigram, " where Burke had dabbled, Paine had dived." There is nothing in the *Rights of Man* which would now frighten, though some of its expressions might still shock, a lady-in-waiting ; but to profess Republicanism in 1791 was no joke, and the book was proclaimed and Paine prosecuted. Acting upon the advice of William Blake (the truly sublime), Paine escaped to France, where he was elected by three departments to a seat in the Convention, and in that Convention he sat from September, 1792, to December, 1793, when he was found quarters in the Luxembourg Prison.

This invitation to foreigners to take part in the conduct of the French Revolution was surely one of the oddest things that ever happened, but Paine thought it natural enough so far, at least, as he was concerned. He could not speak a word of French, and all his harangues had to be translated and read to the Convention by a secretary, whilst Thomas stood smirking in the Tribune. His behaviour throughout was most creditable to him. He acted with the Girondists, and strongly opposed and voted against the murder of the King. His notion of a revolution was one by pamphlet, and he shrank from deeds of blood. His whole position was false and ridiculous. He really counted for nothing. The members of the Convention grew tired of his doctrinaire harangues, which, in fact, bored them not a little; but they respected his enthusiasm and the part he had played in America, whither they would gladly he had returned. Who put him in prison is a mystery. Mr. Conway thinks it was the American Minister in Paris, Gouverneur Morris. He escaped the guillotine, and was set free after ten months' confinement.

All this time Washington had not moved a finger in behalf of the author of *Common-sense* and *The Crisis*. Amongst Paine's papers this epigram was found :

"ADVICE TO THE STATUARY WHO IS TO EXECUTE THE  
STATUE OF WASHINGTON.

Take from the mine the coldest, hardest stone;  
It needs no fashion—it is Washington.  
But if you chisel, let the stroke be rude,  
And on his heart engrave—' Ingratitude.' "

This is hard hitting.

So far we have only had the Republican Paine, the outlaw Paine; the atheist Paine has not appeared. He did so in the *Age of Reason*, first published in 1794-1795. The object of this book was religious. Paine was a vehement believer in God and in the Divine government of the world, but he was not, to put it mildly, a Bible Christian. Nobody now is ever likely to read the *Age of Reason* for instruction or amusement. Who now reads even Mr. Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, which is in effect, though not in substance, the same kind of book? Paine was a coarse writer, without refinement of nature, and he used brutal expressions and hurled his vulgar words about in a manner certain to displease. Still, despite it all, the *Age of Reason* is a religious book, though a singularly unattractive one.

Paine remained in France advocating all kinds of things, including a descent on England, the abduction of the Royal Family, and a Free Constitution. Napoleon sought him out, and assured him that he (Napoleon) slept with the *Rights of Man* under his pillow. Paine believed him.

In 1802 Paine returned to America, after fifteen years' absence.

"Thou stricken friend of man," exclaims Mr. Conway in a fine pasage, "who hast appealed from the God of Wrath to the God of Humanity, see in the distance that Maryland coast which early voyagers called Avalon, and sing again your song when first stepping on that shore twenty-seven years ago."

The rest of Paine's life was spent in America without distinction or much happiness. He continued writing to the last, and died bravely on the morning of June 8, 1809.

The Americans did not appreciate Paine's theology, and in 1819 allowed Cobbett to carry the bones of the author of *Common-sense* to England, where—"as rare things will," so, at least, Mr. Browning sings—they vanished. Nobody knows what has become of them.

As a writer Paine has no merits of a lasting character, but he had a marvellous journalistic knack for inventing names and headings. He is believed to have concocted the two phrases "The United States of America" and "The Religion of Humanity." Considering how little he had read, his discourses on the theory of government are wonderful, and his views generally were almost invariably liberal, sensible, and humane. What ruined him was an intolerable self-conceit, which led him to believe that his own productions superseded those of other men. He knew off by heart, and was fond of repeating, his own *Common-sense* and the *Rights of Man*. He was destitute of the spirit of research, and was wholly without one shred of humility. He was an oddity, a character, but he never took the first step towards becoming a great man.

## CHARLES LAMB.

(1885)

MR. WALTER BAGEHOT preferred Hazlitt to Lamb, reckoning the former much the greater writer. The preferences of such a man as Bagehot are not to be lightly disregarded, least of all when their sincerity is vouched for, as in the present case, by half a hundred quotations from the favoured author. Certainly no writer repays a literary man's devotion better than Hazlitt, of whose twenty seldom read volumes hardly a page but glitters with quotable matter; the true ore, to be had for the cost of cartage. You may live like a gentleman for a twelvemonth on Hazlitt's ideas. Opinions, no doubt, differ as to how many quotations a writer is entitled to; but, for my part, I like to see an author leap-frog into his subject over the back of a brother.

I do not remember whether Bagehot has anywhere given his reasons for his preference—the open avowal whereof drove Crabb Robinson well-nigh distracted; and it is always rash to find reasons for a faith you do not share; but probably they partook of the nature of a complaint that Elia's treatment of men and things (meaning by things, books)



is often fantastical, unreal, even a shade insincere ; whilst Hazlitt always at least aims at the centre, whether he hits it or not. Lamb may be said to dance round a subject, but whilst dancing, occasionally probes it to the very centre. Hazlitt is always found grappling with his theme, but he does not invariably succeed, despite his prodigious effort, completely to master it. His literary method realizes the agreeable aspiration of Mr. Browning's *Italian in England* :

“ I would grasp Metternich until  
I felt his wet red throat distil  
In blood thro' these two hands.”

Hazlitt is always grasping some Metternich. He said himself that Lamb's talk was like snap-dragon, and his own “ not very much like a game of nine pins.” Lamb, writing to him on one occasion about his son, wishes the little fellow a “ smoother head of hair and somewhat of a better temper than his father ;” and the pleasant words seem to call back from the past the stormy figure of the man who loved art, literature, and the drama with a consuming passion, who has described books and plays, authors and actors, with a fiery enthusiasm and reality quite unsurpassable, and who yet, neither living nor dead, has received his due meed of praise. Men still continue to hold aloof from Hazlitt ; his shaggy head and fierce scowling temper still seem to terrorize ; and his very books, telling us though they do about all things most delightful—poems, pictures, and the cheerful playhouse—frown upon

us from their upper shelf. From this it appears that would a genius ensure for himself immortality, he must brush his hair and keep his temper ; but, alas ! how seldom can he be persuaded to do either. Charles Lamb did both ; and the years as they roll do but swell the rich revenues of his praise.

Lamb's popularity shows no sign of waning. Even that most extraordinary compound, the rising generation of readers, whose taste in literature is as erratic as it is pronounced ; who have never heard of James Thomson who sang *The Seasons* (including the pleasant episode of Musidora bathing), but understand by any reference to that name only the striking author of *The City of Dreadful Night* ; even these wayward folk—the dogs of whose criticism, not yet full grown, will, when let loose, as some day they must be, cry “ havoc ” amongst established reputations—read their Lamb, letters as well as essays, with laughter and with love. .

If it be really seriously urged against Lamb as an author that he is fantastical and artistically artificial, it must be owned he is so. His humour, exquisite as it is, is modish. It may not be for all markets.\* How it affected the Scottish Thersites we know only too well—that dour spirit required more potent draughts to make him forget his misery and laugh. It took Swift or Smollett to move his mirth, which was always, three parts of it, derision. Lamb's elaborateness, what he himself calls his affected array of antique modes and phrases, is sometimes overlooked in these strange days, when it is thought better to

\* Irishmen are apt to prefer Leigh Hunt.

read about an author than to read him. To read aloud the *Praise of Chimney Sweepers* without stumbling or halting, not to say mispronouncing, and to set in motion every one of its carefully-swung sentences, is a very pretty feat in elocution, for there is not what can be called a natural sentence in it from beginning to end. Many people have not patience for this sort of thing ; they like to laugh and move on. Other people, again, like an essay to be about something really important, and to conduct them to conclusions they deem worth carrying away. Lamb's views about indiscriminate almsgiving, so far as these can be extracted from his paper *On the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis*, are unsound, whilst I once knew three old ladies who considered the essay entitled *A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People* improper. But, as a rule, Lamb's essays are neither unsound nor improper ; none the less they are, in the judgment of some, things of naught—not only lacking, as Southey complained they did, “sound religious feeling,” but everything else really worthy of attention.

To discuss such congenital differences of taste is idle ; but it is not idle to observe that when Lamb is read, as he surely deserves to be, as a whole—letters and poems no less than essays—these notes of fantasy and artificiality no longer dominate. The man Charles Lamb was far more real, far more serious, despite his jesting, more self-contained and self-restrained, than Hazlitt, who wasted his life in the pursuit of the veriest will-o'-the-wisps that ever

dance over the most miasmatic of swamps, who was never his own man, and who died, like Brian de Bois Guilbert, "the victim of contending passions." It should never be forgotten that Lamb's vocation was his life. Literature was but his by-play, his avocation in the true sense of that much-abused word. He was not a fisherman, but an angler in the lake of letters; an author by chance and on the sly. He had a right to disport himself on paper, to play the frolic with his own fancies, to give the decalogue the slip, whose life was made up of the sternest stuff, of self-sacrifice, devotion, honesty, and good sense.

Lamb's letters from first to last are full of the philosophy of life; he was as sensible a man as Dr. Johnson. One grows sick of the expressions "poor Charles Lamb," "gentle Charles Lamb," as if he were one of those grown-up children who are perpetually begging and borrowing through the round of every man's acquaintance. Charles Lamb earned his own living, paid his own way, was the helper, not the helped; a man who was beholden to no one, who always came with gifts in his hand, a shrewd man, capable of advice, strong in counsel. Poor Lamb, indeed! Poor Coleridge, robbed of his will; poor Wordsworth, devoured by his own *ego*; poor Southey, writing his tomes and deeming himself a classic; poor Carlyle, with his nine volumes of memoirs, where he

"Lies like a hedgehog, rolled up the wrong way,  
Tormenting himself with his prickles"—

call these men poor, if you feel it decent to do so,

but not Lamb, who was rich in all that makes life valuable or memory sweet. But he used to get drunk. This explains all. Be untruthful, unfaithful, unkind ; darken the lives of all who have to live under your shadow, rob youth of joy, take peace from age, live unsought for, die unmourned—and remaining sober you will escape the curse of men's pity, and be spoken of as a worthy person. But if ever, amidst what Burns called " social noise," you so far forget yourself as to get drunk, think not to plead a spotless life spent with those for whom you have laboured and saved ; talk not of the love of friends or of help given to the needy ; least of all make reference to a noble self-sacrifice passing the love of women, for all will avail you nothing. You get drunk—and the heartless and the selfish and the lewd crave the privilege of pitying you, and receiving your name with an odious smile. It is really too bad, and I must stop.

## WILLIAM HAZLITT.

(1886)

FOR an author to fare better dead than alive is good proof of his literary vivacity and charm. The rare merit of Hazlitt's writing was recognized in his lifetime by good judges, but his fame was obscured by the unpopularity of many of his opinions, and the venom he was too apt to instil into his personal reminiscences. He was not a safe man to confide in. He had a forked crest which he sometimes lifted. Because they both wrote essays and were fond of the Elizabethans, it became the fashion to link Hazlitt's name with Lamb's. To be compared with the incomparable is hard fortune. Hazlitt suffered by the comparison, and consequently his admirers, usually in those early days men of keen wits and sharp tongues, grew angry, and infused into their just eulogiums too much of Hazlitt's personal bitterness, and too little of his wide literary sympathies.

But this period of obscurity is now over. No really good thing once come into existence and remaining so is ever lost to the world. This is most comfortable doctrine, and true, besides. In the long run the world's taste is infallible. All it requires is

time. How easy it is to give it that ! Is substantial injustice at this moment done to a single English writer of prose or verse who died prior to the 1st of January, 1801 ? Is there a single bad author of this same class who is now read ? Both questions may be truthfully answered by a joyful shout of, No ! This fact ought to make the most unpopular of living authors the sweetest-tempered of men. The sight of your rival clinging to the cob he has purchased and maintains out of the profits of the trashiest of novels should be pleasant owing to the reflections that both rival and cob are trotting to the same pit of oblivion.

But humorous as is the prospect of the coming occultation of personally disagreeable authors, the final establishment of the fame of a dead one is a nobler spectacle.

William Hazlitt had to take a thrashing from life. He took it standing up like a man, not lying down like a cur ; but take it he had to do. He died on September 18, 1830, tired out, discomfited, defeated. Nobody reviewing the facts of his life can say that it was well spent. There is nothing in it of encouragement. He reaped what he sowed, and it proved a sorry harvest. When he lay dying he wanted his mother brought to his side, but she was at a great distance, and eighty-four years of age, and could not come. Carlyle in his old age, grim, worn, and scornful, said once, sorrowfully enough, " What I want is a mother." It is indeed an excellent relationship.

But though Hazlitt got the worst of it in his per-



sonal encounter with the universe, he nevertheless managed to fling down before he died what will suffice to keep his name alive. You cannot kill merit. We are all too busily engaged struggling with dulness, our own and other people's, and with ennui ; we are far too much surrounded by would-be-wits and abortive thinkers, ever to forget what a weapon against weariness lies to our hand in the works of Hazlitt, who is as refreshing as cold water, as grateful as shade.

His great charm consists in his hearty reality. Life may be a game, and all its enjoyments counters, but Hazlitt, as we find him in his writings—and there is now no need to look for him anywhere else—played the game and dealt out the counters like a man bent on winning. He cared greatly about many things. His admiration was not extravagant, but his force is great ; in fact, one may say of him as he said of John Cavanagh, the famous fives player, “ His service was tremendous.” Indeed, Hazlitt's whole description of Cavanagh's play reminds one of his own literary method :

“ His style of play was as remarkable as his power of execution. He had no affectation, no trifling. He did not throw away the game to show off an attitude or try an experiment. He was a fine, sensible, manly player, who did what he could, but that was more than any one else could even affect to do. His blows were not undecided and ineffectual, lumbering like Mr. Wordsworth's epic poetry, nor wavering like Mr. Coleridge's lyric prose, nor short of the mark like Mr. Brougham's speeches, nor

wide of it like Mr. Canning's wit, nor foul like the *Quarterly*, nor *let* balls like the *Edinburgh Review*."

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Brougham, Canning! was ever a fives player so described before? What splendid reading it makes! but we quote it for the purpose of applying its sense to Hazlitt himself. As Cavanagh played, so Hazlitt wrote.

He is always interesting, and always writes about really interesting things. His talk is of poets and players, of Shakespeare and Kean, of Fielding and Scott, of Burke and Cobbett, of prize fights and Indian jugglers. When he condescends to the abstract, his subjects bring an appetite with them. The Shyness of Scholars, The Fear of Death, The Identity of an Author with his Books, Effeminacy of Character, The Conversation of Lords, On Reading New Books: the very titles make you lick your lips.

Hazlitt may have been an unhappy man, but he was above the vile affectation of pretending to see nothing in life. Had he not seen Mrs. Siddons, had he not read "Rousseau," had he not worshipped Titian in the Louvre?

No English writer better pays the debt of gratitude always owing to great poets, painters, and authors than Hazlitt; but his is a manly, not a maudlin, gratitude. No other writer has such gusto as he. The glowing passage in which he describes Titian's St. Peter Martyr almost recalls the canvas uninjured from the flames which have since destroyed it. We seem to see the landscape background, "with that cold convent spire rising in the distance amidst the blue sapphire mountains and the

golden sky." His essay on Sir Walter Scott and the "Waverley Novels" is the very best that has ever been written on that magnificent subject.

As a companion at the Feast of Wits commend us to Hazlitt, and as a companion for a fortnight's holiday commend us to the admirable selection recently made from his works, which are numerous—some twenty volumes—by Mr. Ireland, and published at a cheap price by Messrs. F. Warne and Co. The task of selection is usually a thankless one. It involves of necessity omission and frequent curtailment. It is annoying to look in vain for some favourite passage, and your annoyance prompts the criticism that a really sound judgment would have made room for what you miss. We lodge no complaint against Mr. Ireland. Like a wise man, he has allowed to himself ample space, and he has compiled a volume of 510 closely though well-printed pages, which has only to be read in order to make the reader well acquainted with an author whom not to know is a severe mental deprivation.

Mr. Ireland's book is a library in itself, and a marvellous tribute to the genius of its author. It seems almost incredible that one man should have said so many good things. It is true he does not go very deep as a critic, he does not see into the soul of the matter as Lamb and Coleridge occasionally do—but he holds you very tight—he grasps the subject, he enjoys it himself and makes you do so. Perhaps he does say too many good things. His sparkling sentences follow so quickly one upon another that the reader's appreciation soon becomes

a breathless appreciation. There is something almost uncanny in such sustained cleverness. This impression, however, must not be allowed to remain as a final impression. In Hazlitt the reader will find trains of sober thought pursued with deep feeling and melancholy. Turn to the essays, *On Living to One's Self*, *On Going a Journey*, *On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth*, and read them over again. When you have done so you will be indisposed to consider their author as a mere sayer of good things. He was much more than that. One smiles when, on reading the first Lord Lytton's *Thoughts on the Genius of Hazlitt*, the author of *Eugene Aram* is found declaring that Hazlitt "had a keen sense of the Beautiful and the Subtle ; and what is more, he was deeply imbued with sympathies for the Humane ;" but when Lord Lytton proceeds, "Posterity will do him justice," we cease to smile, and handling Mr. Ireland's book, observe with deep satisfaction, "It has."

## EMERSON

(1886)

THERE are men whose charm is in their entirety. Their words occasionally utter what their looks invariably express. We read their thoughts by the light of their smiles. Not to see and hear these men is not to know them, and criticism without personal knowledge is in their case mutilation. Those who did know them listen in despair to the half-hearted praise and clumsy disparagement of critical strangers, and are apt to exclaim, as did the younger Pitt, when some extraneous person was expressing wonder at the enormous reputation of Fox, "Ah, you have never been under the wand of the magician."

Of such was Ralph Waldo Emerson. When we find so cool-brained a critic as Mr. Lowell writing and quoting thus of Emerson :

"Those who heard him while their natures were yet plastic, and their mental nerves trembled under the slightest breath of divine air, will never cease to feel and say :

" ' Was never eye did see that face,  
Was never ear did hear that tongue,

Was never mind did mind his grace  
 That ever thought the travail long ;  
 But eyes, and ears, and every thought  
 Were with his sweet perfections caught ; ' "

we recognize at once that the sooner we take off our shoes the better, for that the ground upon which we are standing is holy. How can we sufficiently honour the men who, in this secular, work-a-day world, habitually breathe

“ An ampler ether, a diviner air,”  
 than ours !

But testimony of this kind, conclusive as it is upon the question of Emerson's personal influence, will not always be admissible in support of his claims as an author. In the long run an author's only witnesses are his own books.

In Dr. Holmes's estimate of Emerson's books every one must wish to concur.\* These are not the days, nor is this dry and thirsty land of ours the place, when or where we can afford to pass by any well of spiritual influence. It is matter, therefore, for rejoicing that, in the opinion of so many good judges, Emerson's well can never be choked up. His essays, so at least we are told by no less a critic than Mr. Arnold, are the most valuable prose contributions to English literature of the century ; his letters to Mr. Carlyle carried into all our homes the charm of a most delightful personality ; the quaint melody of his poems abides in many ears. He would, indeed, be a churl who grudged Emerson his fame.

But when we are considering a writer so full of

\* See *Life of Emerson*, by O. W. Holmes.

intelligence as Emerson—one so remote and detached from the world's bluster and brag—it is especially incumbent upon us to charge our own language with intelligence, and to make sure that what we say is at least truth for us.

Were we at liberty to agree with Dr. Holmes in his unmeasured praise—did we, in short, find Emerson full of inspiration—our task would be as easy as it would be pleasant; but not entirely agreeing with Dr. Holmes, and somehow missing the inspiration, the difficulty we began by mentioning presses heavily upon us.

Pleasant reading as the introductory thirty-five pages of Dr. Holmes's book make, we doubt the wisdom of so very sketchy an account of Emerson's lineage and intellectual environment. Attracted towards Emerson everybody must be; but there are many who have never been able to get quit of an uneasy fear as to his "staying power." He has seemed to some of us a little thin and vague. A really great author dissipates all such fears. Read a page and they are gone. To inquire after the intellectual health of such a one would be an impertinence. Emerson hardly succeeds in inspiring this confidence, but is more like a clever invalid who says, and is encouraged by his friends to say, brilliant things, but of whom it would be cruel to expect prolonged mental exertion. A man, he himself has said, "should give us a sense of mass." He perhaps does not do so. This gloomy and possibly distorted view is fostered rather than discouraged by Dr. Holmes's introductory pages about Boston



life and intellect. It does not seem to have been a very strong place. We lack performance. It is of small avail to write, as Dr. Holmes does, about "brilliant circles," and "literary luminaries," and then to pass on, and leave the circles circulating and the luminaries shining *in vacuo*. We want to know how they were brilliant, and what they illuminated. If you wish me to believe that you are witty I must really trouble you to make a joke. Dr. Holmes's own wit, for example, is as certain as the law of gravitation, but over all these pages of his hangs vagueness, and we scan them in vain for reassuring details.

"Mild orthodoxy, ripened in Unitarian sunshine," does not sound very appetizing, though we are assured by Dr. Holmes that it is "a very agreeable aspect of Christianity." Emerson himself does not seem to have found it very lively, for in 1832, after three years' experience of the ministry of the "Second Church" of Boston, he retires from it, not tumultuously or with any deep feeling, but with something very like a yawn. He concludes his farewell sermon to his people as follows :

"Having said this I have said all. I have no hostility to this institution.\* I am only stating my want of sympathy with it."

Dr. Holmes makes short work of Emerson's childhood. He was born in Boston on the 25th May, 1803, and used to sit upon a wall and drive his mother's cow to pasture. In fact, Dr. Holmes adds nothing to what we already knew of the quiet and

\* The institution referred to was probably the Lord's Supper.

blameless life that came to its appointed end on the 27th April, 1882. On the completion of his college education, Emerson became a student of theology, and after a turn at teaching, was ordained, in March, 1829, minister of the "Second Church" in Boston. In September of the same year he married; and the death of his young wife, in February, 1832, perhaps quickened the doubts and disinclinations which severed his connection with his "Church" on the 9th September, 1832. The following year he visited Europe for the first time, and made his celebrated call upon Carlyle at Craigenputtock, and laid the keel of a famous friendship. In the summer of 1834 he settled at Concord. He married again, visited England again, wrote essays, delivered lectures, made orations, published poems, carried on a long and most remarkable correspondence with Carlyle, enjoyed after the most temperate and serene of fashions many things and much happiness. And then he died.

"Can you emit sparks?" said the cat to the ugly duckling in the fairy tale, and the poor abashed creature had to admit that it could not. Emerson could emit sparks with the most electrical of cats. He is all sparks and shocks. If one were required to name the most non-sequacious author one had ever read, I do not see how one could help nominating Emerson. But, say some of his warmest admirers, "What then? It does not matter!" It appears to me to matter a great deal.

A wise author never allows his reader's mind to be at large, but casts about from the very first how to

secure it all for himself. He takes you (seemingly) into his confidence, perhaps pretends to consult you as to the best route, but at all events points out to you the road, lying far ahead, which you are to travel in his company. How carefully does a really great writer, like Dr. Newman or M. Renan, explain to you what he is going to do and how he is going to do it! His humour, wit, and fancy, however abundant they may be, spring up like wayside flowers, and do but adorn and render more attractive the path along which it is his object to conduct you. The reader's mind, interested from the beginning, and desirous of ascertaining whether the author keeps his word and adheres to his plan, feels the glow of healthy exercise, and pays a real though unconscious attention. But Emerson makes no terms with his readers—he gives them neither thread nor clue, and thus robs them of one of the keenest pleasures of reading—the being beforehand with your author, and going shares with him in his own thoughts.

If it be said that it is manifestly unfair to compare a mystical writer like Emerson with a polemical or historical one, I am not concerned to answer the objection, for let the comparison be made with whom you will, the unparalleled non-sequaciousness of Emerson is as certain as the Correggiosity of Correggio. You never know what he will be at. His sentences fall over you in glittering cascades, beautiful and bright, and for the moment refreshing, but after a very brief while the mind, having nothing to do on its own account but to remain wide open, and see what Emerson sends it, grows first restive and

then torpid. Admiration gives way to astonishment, astonishment to bewilderment, and bewilderment to stupefaction.

"Napoleon is not a man, but a system," once said, in her most impressive tones, Madame de Staël to Sir James Mackintosh, across a dinner-table. "Magnificent!" murmured Sir James. "But what does she mean?" whispered one of those helplessly commonplace creatures who, like the present writer, go about spoiling everything. "Mass! I cannot tell!" was the frank acknowledgment and apt Shakespearian quotation of Mackintosh. Emerson's meaning, owing to his non-sequacious style, is often very difficult to apprehend. Hear him for a moment on "Experience":

"I gossip for my hour concerning the eternal politic. I have seen many fair pictures, not in vain. A wonderful time I have lived in. I am not the novice I was fourteen, nor yet seven years ago. Let who will ask, Where is the fruit? I find a private fruit sufficient. This is a fruit, that I should not ask for a rash effect from meditations, counsels, and the hiving of fruits."

This is surely an odd way of hiving truths. It follows from it that Emerson is more striking than suggestive. He likes things on a large scale—he is fond of ethnical remarks and typical persons. Notwithstanding his habit of introducing the names of common things into his discourses and poetry ("Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood," is a line from one of his poems), his familiarity therewith is evidently not great. "Take care,

papa," cried his little son, seeing him at work with his spade, "you will dig your leg."

His essay on *Friendship* will not be found satisfactory. Here is a subject on which surely we are entitled to "body." The *Over Soul* was different: *there* it was easy to agree with Carlyle, who, writing to Emerson, says: "Those voices of yours which I likened to unembodied souls and censure sometimes for having no body—how *can* they have a body? They are light rays darting upwards in the east!" But friendship is a word the very sight of which in print makes the heart warm. One remembers Elia: "Oh! it is pleasant as it is rare to find the same arm linked in yours at forty which at thirteen helped it to turn over the Cicero *De Amicitia*, or some other tale of antique friendship which the young heart even then was burning to anticipate." With this in your ear it is rather chilling to read, "I do, then, with my friends as I do with my books. I would have them where I can find them, but I seldom use them. We must have society on our own terms, and admit or exclude it on the slightest cause. I cannot afford to speak much with my friend." These are not genial terms.

For authors and books his affection, real as it was, was singularly impersonal. In his treatment of literary subjects, we miss the purely human touch, the grip of affection, the accent of scorn, that so pleasantly characterize the writings of Mr. Lowell. Emerson, it is to be feared, regarded a company of books but as a congeries of ideas. For one idea he is indebted to Plato, for another to Dr. Channing.

*Sartor Resartus*, so Emerson writes, is a noble philosophical poem, but "have you read Sampson Read's *Growth of the Mind?*" Emerson's notions of literary perspective are certainly "very early." Dr. Holmes himself is every bit as bad. In this very book of his, speaking about the dangerous liberty some poets—Emerson amongst the number—take of crowding a redundant syllable into a line, he reminds us "that Shakespeare and Milton knew how to use it effectively; Shelley employed it freely; Bryant indulged in it; Willis was fond of it." One has heard of the *Republic of Letters*, but this surely does not mean that one author is as good as another. "Willis was fond of it." I dare say he was, but we are not fond of Willis, and cannot help regarding the citation of his poetical example as an outrage.

None the less, if we will have but a little patience, and bid our occasional wonderment be still, and read Emerson at the right times and in small quantities, we shall not remain strangers to his charm. He bathes the universe in his thoughts. Nothing less than the Whole ever contented Emerson. His was no parochial spirit. He cries out :

"From air and ocean bring me foods,  
From all zones and altitudes."

How beautiful, too, are some of his sentences! Here is a bit from his essay on Shakespeare in *Representative Men* :

"It is the essence of poetry to spring like the rainbow daughter of Wonder from the invisible, to



abolish the past, and refuse all history. Malone, Warburton, Dyce, and Collier have wasted their life. The famed theatres have vainly assisted. Betterton; Garrick, Kemble, Kean, and Macready dedicate their lives to his genius—him they crown, elucidate, obey, and express—the genius knows them not. The recitation begins, *one golden word leaps out immortal from all this painful pedantry, and sweetly torments us with invitations to his own inaccessible homes.*”

The words we have ventured to italicize seem to me to be of surpassing beauty, and to express what many a playgoer of late years must often have dimly felt.

Patience should indeed be the motto for any Emerson reader who is not by nature “author’s kin.” For example, in the Essay on *Character*, after reading, “Everything in nature is bipolar, or has a positive and negative pole. There is a male and a female, a spirit and a fact, a north and a south. Spirit is the positive, the event is the negative; will is the north, action the south pole. Character may be ranked as having its natural place in the north” —how easy to lay the book down and read no more that day; but a moment’s patience is amply rewarded, for but sixteen lines farther on we may read as follows: “We boast our emancipation from many superstitions, but if we have broken any idols it is through a transfer of the idolatry. What have I gained that I no longer immolate a bull to Jove or to Neptune, or a mouse to Hecate; that I do not tremble before the Eumenides or the Catholic Purgatory, or the Calvinistic Judgment Day—if I



quake at opinion, the public opinion as we call it, or the threat of assault or contumely, or bad neighbours, or poverty, or mutilation, or at the rumour of revelation or of wonder! If I quake, what matters it what I quake at?" Well and truly did Carlyle write to Emerson, "You are a new era, my man, in your huge country."

Emerson's poetry has at least one of the qualities of true poetry—it always pleases and occasionally delights. Great poetry it may not be, but it has the happy knack of slipping in between our fancies, and of clinging like ivy to the masonry of the thought-structure beneath which each one of us has his dwelling. I must be allowed room for two quotations one from the stanzas called *Give all to Love*, the other from *Wood Notes*.

“Cling with life to the maid;  
But when the surprise,  
First shadow of surmise,  
Flits across her bosom young  
Of a joy apart from thee,  
Free be she, fancy-free,  
Nor thou detain her vesture's hem,  
Nor the palest rose she flung  
From her summer's diadem.  
Though thou loved her as thyself,  
As a self of purer clay,  
Though her parting dims the day,  
Stealing grace from all alive;  
Heartily know  
When half-gods go,  
The gods arrive.”

The lines from *Wood Notes* run as follows:

“Come learn with me the fatal song  
Which knits the world in music strong,

Where to every bosom dances,  
Kindled with courageous fancies ;  
Come lift thine eyes to lofty rhymes  
Of things with things, of times with times :  
Primal chimes of sun and shade,  
Of sound and echo, man and maid ;  
The land reflected in the flood ;  
Body with shadow still pursued.  
For Nature beats in perfect tune  
And rounds with rhyme her every runo  
Whether she work in land or sea  
Or hide underground her alchemy.  
Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,  
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,  
But it carves the bow of beauty there,  
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.  
Not unrelated, unaffied,  
But to each thought and thing allied,  
Is perfect Nature's every part,  
Rooted in the mighty heart."

What place Emerson is to occupy in American literature is for America to determine. Some well-considered remarks on this subject are to be found in Mr. Lowell's essay on "Thoreau," in *My Study Windows* ; but here in the old home, where we are sorely pressed for room, it is certain he must be content with a small allotment, where, however, he may for ever sit beneath his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid. Emerson will always be the favourite author of somebody ; and to be always read by somebody is better than to be read first by everybody and then by nobody. Indeed, it is hard to fancy a pleasanter destiny than to join the company of lesser authors. All their readers are sworn friends. They are spared the harsh discords of ill-judged praise and feigned rapture. Once or twice

in a century some enthusiastic and expansive admirer insists upon dragging them from their shy retreats, and trumpeting their fame in the market-place, asserting, possibly with loud asseverations (after the fashion of Mr. Swinburne), that they are precisely as much above Otway and Collins and George Eliot as they are below Shakespeare and Hugo and Emily Brontë. The great world looks on good-humouredly for a moment or two, and then proceeds as before, and the disconcerted author is left free to scuttle back to his corner, where he is all the happier, sharing the raptures of the lonely student, for his brief experience of publicity.

Let us bid farewell to Emerson, who has bidden farewell to the world in the words of his own *Good-bye* :

“ Good-bye to flattery’s fawning face,  
To grandeur with his wise grimace,  
To upstart wealth’s averted eye,  
To supple office low and high,  
To crowded halls, to court and street,  
To frozen hearts and hasting feet,  
To those who go and those who come,—  
Good-bye, proud world, I’m going home.  
I am going to my own hearth-stone  
Bosomed in yon green hills, alone,  
A secret nook in a pleasant land,  
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned  
Where arches green the livelong day  
Echo the blackbird’s roundelay,  
And vulgar feet have never trod,  
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.”

## JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE.

(1895)

IT is part of the melancholy of middle age that it dooms us to witness one by one the extinguishment of the lights that cast their radiance over youth. When I was at Cambridge, in the very early seventies, the men most discussed by undergraduates (outside the realm of science) were Newman, Froude, Carlyle, and Ruskin—Tennyson, Browning, and Matthew Arnold. The names of Swinburne and George Meredith were indeed hotly canvassed by a few, but neither of these distinguished men was then well enough known to youngsters to allow of general conversation about their merits. To have read *The Shaving of Shagpat*, *Rhoda Fleming*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, was to betray a curious taste, and a desire to be wise above your fellows, while Mr. Swinburne's splendid verses were at that time the badge of a coterie. So it was about the names I have mentioned the battle raged most furiously; and of them all, but one is left.\*

Nor can it be said—death makes no difference. When a great writer whose books we read as they came forth warm from his heart goes over to the

\* None now.

majority, he does not forthwith join the ranks of the dead but sceptred sovereigns who rule the world from their urns. To those who come after him he may or may not be able to make out a title to possession of their memories ; but these after-comers will judge for themselves with a cool, literary judgment. The Johnson of Boswell is known to us all ; but he is not the Johnson of Bennet Langton, of Beauclerk, or of Levett. A single interview, had we ever had one, with the sage in Bolt Court would put Boswell out, and to that extent destroy the purely literary impression of the world's greatest biography. The charm for us about the men I have named is that they and we were alive at the same time.

Mr. Froude's death is a personal infliction upon the Old World and the New. He had many friends, and not a few enemies, in both hemispheres. He was a strenuous man who enjoyed himself in many ways, and could adapt himself to a great variety of circumstance. With sorrow he was indeed well acquainted—he knew what it was to be both bitterly disappointed and cruelly wounded. He carried about with him in all his wanderings much sad human experience ; his philosophy of life was more sombre than sweet. I do not think anybody who knew him would describe him as a happy man. But for all that he managed to enjoy himself heartily enough.

“ The storm has passed away, the dripping trees are sparkling in the warm and watery sunset. Back, then, to our inn, where dinner waits for us—the choicest of our own trout, pink as salmon with the milky curd in them, and no sauce to spoil the deli-

cacy of their flavour. Then bed, with its lavender-scented sheets and white curtains, and sleep—sound sweet sleep that loves the country village and comes not near a London bedroom ” (*Short Studies*, Fourth Series, p. 351).

And his enjoyment of books, if they were the right sort, was as keen as his love of a trout-stream. He was an old-fashioned scholar who read books for fun or to find reasons for his preconceptions, or (it may be) stones with which to pelt his enemies. The note of personal enjoyment or eager animosity runs through most of his “ writings.” Just before starting for South Africa he bethinks himself of what Aristotle and Goethe have said about Euripides, and how, ever since Oxford and “ the statutory four plays,” he had left Euripides unread, and so he slips him into a coat-pocket, and “ for six weeks Euripides became an enchanter for me, and the Grecian world was raised from the dead into a moonlight visibility with softest lights, and shadows black as Erebus.”

Here in foggy London he would sit the live-long day reading with unflagging zest those tremendous folios, the *Historia sui Temporis* of Thuanus, the book Johnson regretted he had never translated. Froude may have hated correcting proofs or groping among manuscripts at Hatfield, but he loved reading about men and women, and never wearied of re-peopleing the silent past.

“ For the mere hard purposes of history, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the most effective books which ever were written. We see the hall of Menelaus, we see the garden of Alcinous, we see Nausicaa among

her maidens on the shore, we see the mellow monarch sitting with ivory sceptre in the market-place dealing out genial justice. Or, again, when the wild mood is on, we can hear the crash of the spears, the rattle of the armour as the heroes fall, and the plunging of the horses among the slain. Could we enter the palace of an old Ionian lord we know what we should see there ; we know the words in which he would address us. We could meet Hector as a friend. If we could choose a companion to spend an evening with over a fireside, it would be the man of many counsels, the husband of Penelope " (*Short Studies*, i., p. 332).

With all his faults thick as autumn leaves upon him, Froude was a great writer well equipped to play a great part. It may be his fate to stand corrected, just as it is Freeman's fate to be superseded, but he will continue to be read still longer—for how long, who can say ?—for the vivacity of his too often misleading descriptions and for the masculine vigour of his style, and also for the interest of his peculiar point of view, the piquancy of his philosophy, the humour of his commentary, for his quick insight into certain phases of faith and shades of character. And, when all is said and done, these things are at least as interesting as anything else. It never does to speak disrespectfully of accuracy, of research, of stern veracity, of unbiassed judgments, or lightly to confer the grave title of historian upon hasty rhetoricians who have refused to take pains ; but the fact remains that for the ordinary thinking man who has taken his degree, an ounce of mother-wit is often



worth a pound of clergy, and that even the so-called history of an inaccurate but open mind may be not only more amusing but more profitable reading than the work of a more genuine historian.

The first thing that must strike the mind of any one who looks at Froude's writings as a whole is their amazing sameness of object, or, at all events, point of view. It is always the same nail he is hammering on the head. It reminds one of Pope's ruling passion. It crops up everywhere and at all times, firing his zeal wherever he is. What is that object? Why, to counteract what he calls "the Counter-Reformation;" to denounce monkery; to unfrock priests by stripping them of all sacramental pretensions; to topple over everything standing between man and the Force which called him into being; to preach good works and (though here he often wandered from the path) plain homespun morality. This was Froude's work from 1849 to 1894. If only he was about this business he did not mind blundering about his facts; a misquotation or two never disturbed his night's rest. He wanted to get at men's minds, not to store their memories. Sacerdotalism, whether enthroned in the Vatican or burning borrowed candles in Lambeth, was the enemy at whose head he aimed his blows. It was for this he wrote his *History* in twelve octavo volumes. Had Henry VIII. not chanced to be the majestic lord who broke the bonds of Rome and married a wife in spite of a Pope, Froude would have left him severely alone; but doing what Henry did, Froude put on his royal livery, and did him suit and service,

striking on his behalf many a cruel and one or two unmanly blows. His excuse must be his devouring hate. With him the sermon was always more important than the text. In his secret soul I suspect Froude cared no more for Henry than did (I am sure) Carlyle for Frederick.

James Anthony Froude was born in Devonshire in 1818. From his two early books, *Shadows of the Clouds* (1847), and *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849), which are clearly in part autobiography, we carry away a disagreeable impression of his youth. His father, Archdeacon Froude, was a masterful Anglican of the old high-and-dry school, who thought doubts ill-bred and Nonconformity vulgar. The doors of his rectory were not open to free currents of opinion. He had no copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress* in his library. The eldest son, the short-lived Hurrell, took to High Churchism and the cult of the royal martyr as some boys take to drink; and having turned it into a hobby-horse, rode merrily away. The youngest son, though very impressionable to personal influences, was cast in a different mould; and from the moment when he first realized that Anglicanism was not everything, began to be uncomfortable in an atmosphere of priests, parishioners, and penny clubs. A painful struggle began, and the choice between wounding a father's feelings and choking his own thoughts had to be made. When we recall how Thomas Arnold was induced to believe it wicked to entertain a doubt as to the existence of a triune God, we need not wonder that an imperious archdeacon and a friendly bishop managed, by a

judicious mixture of kicks and kisses, to wheedle a young man of vague opinions and no excessive scrupulosity of disposition into Holy Orders. Froude, it is tolerably plain, never loved the Church of England. Years after Newman had left the English Episcopal Church, he was able to write with a sad sincerity: "Can I wipe out from my memory or wish to wipe out those happy Sunday mornings, light or dark, year after year, when I celebrated your communion rite in my own Church of St. Mary's, and in the pleasantness and joy of it heard nothing of the strife of tongues which surrounded its walls." Froude entertained no such fine feelings. He had been kidnapped into the ministry. When the time came to regain his freedom, he leapt for joy. "My living is resigned, my employment gone. I am again free, again happy; and all the poor and paltry network in which I was entangled, the weak intrigues which, like the flies in summer, irritate far worse than more serious evils—I have escaped them all. . . . All I really grieve for is my father" (*The Nemesis of Faith*, p. 76).

It is certainly difficult to discover in Froude's writings any traces of departed fervour or unction; and yet if he never had any, how are we to account for his close relations with Newman, and his share, such as it was, in the *Lives of the Saints*?

In the earlier of the two sketches which make up the little book *Shadows of the Clouds*, which was published anonymously in 1847, and gave great annoyance to the archdeacon, Froude boldly deals with the subject of the *Lives of the Saints*:

“ I thought you knew me too well to be surprised at my taking to the *Lives of the Saints*, taking to anything that offered itself. You know I affect to be a philosopher, who does not believe that truth ever shows herself completely in either of the rival armies that claim so loudly to be her champions. She seems to me to lie like the tongue of the balance, only kept in the centre by the equipoise of contending forces, or, rather, if I may use a better illustration, like a boat in a canal drawn forward by a rope from both sides ; which appear as if they would negative each other, and yet produce only a uniform straight-forward motion. I throw myself on this side or on that, as I please, without fear of injuring her. The thought of the great world sweeps on its own great road, but it is its own road ; quite an independent one, not in the least resembling that which Catholic or Protestant, Roundhead or Cavalier, have carved out for it.”

This is not a very pious passage, and I find it impossible to believe that Froude's Neo-Catholicism was ever more than a piece of eclecticism, a boyish tribute to Newman, whose voice never ceased to echo through the chambers of his old disciple's memory. A visit to Ireland, paid just after his degree, introduced Froude for the first time in his life to Evangelicalism, as it was called ; that Evangelicalism for which, so Newman tells us in his *Apologia*, he had learned to entertain a profound contempt, but which affected his young associate very differently. In Ireland Froude met men “ who had gone through as many, as various, and as subtle

Christian experiences as the most developed saint in the Catholic calendar. I saw it in their sermons, in their hymns, in their conversation." He tells us of a clergyman, afterwards a bishop in the Irish Church, who declared in his hearing that the theory of a Christian priesthood was a fiction; that the notion of the Sacraments, as having a mechanical efficacy, irrespective of their conscious effect upon the mind of the receiver, was an idolatrous superstition; that the Church was a human institution; that it might have bishops in England, and dispense with bishops in Scotland and Germany; that a bishop was merely an officer; that the apostolical succession was probably false as a fact, and if a fact, implied nothing but historical continuity. Froude listened to these blasphemies without terror, and returned to Oxford to take up his residence as a Fellow, convinced at least of this, that a holy life was no monopoly of the sacramental theory. It was now a mere question of time when Froude should run off the Catholic rails. He read Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and contrasted the Scottish author with the Oxford one. "For the first time now it was brought home to me that two men may be as sincere, as faithful, as uncompromising, and yet hold opinions far asunder as the poles. I have before said that I think the moment of this conviction is the most perilous crisis of our lives; for myself it threw me at once on my own responsibility, obliged me to look for myself at what men said, instead of simply accepting all because they said it" (*The Nemesis of Faith*, p. 156).

There is something childish, almost despicable, in the system of education which in the case of so clever a man as Froude postponed this discovery so long. Before many days were over J. A. Froude was a heretic. What faith was he now to pursue? Positive theological opinions were evidently out of his beat. He might admire his Irish friends and their beauty of holiness, but the Evangelical doctrine of the Atonement would have proved as much a stumbling-block as the miracle of the Mass. Froude's historical imagination came to his assistance. A Devonshire man, he was English to the core, and having quarrelled with priests and popes, his thoughts turned to the great discomfiture which befell priests and popes at the Reformation. He very quickly grew excited. He had early perceived that the object of the Oxford tract writers was to unprotestantize England—to make John Bull once more a Catholic, full of reverence for saints and shrines and priests and mysteries; or, as he says in *The Nemesis of Faith*, p. 151, “to make England cease to produce great men, as we count greatness—and for poetry, courage, daring enterprise, resolution, and broad honest understanding, substitute devotion, endurance, humility, self-denial, sanctity and faith.” This is to put the case fairly enough, and thenceforward Froude was before everything else a Protestant, preaching a broad Protestant John Bullism as opposed to Catholic piety and submission. Theology, properly so called, he abandoned, though as he grew older and became more conservative he discouraged free thought, and re-



gretted the days when plain people took their creed from their parson just as they did their meat from their butcher, with only a very occasional threat of changing their custom. In scientific research and the origin of species he simply took no interest whatever. He would have us believe that his faith in the Judge of all the earth was unwavering, but his readers will find it hard to recall to mind any passage which even approaches the tone or temper of either religious devotion or conviction. Certainly, on the whole Froude's antipathies seem stronger than his affections.

Once rid of his orders and deprived of his fellowship, Froude naturally turned to literature, and to literature on its historical side. He had from the first a passion for expressing himself forcibly and clearly. "Oh, how I wish I could write! I try sometimes; for I seem to feel myself overflowing with thoughts, and I cry out to be relieved of them. But it is so stiff and miserable when I get anything done. What seemed so clear and liquid comes out so thick, stupid, and frost-bitten, that I myself, who put the idea there, can hardly find it for shame if I go look for it a few days after." The man who could write thus was bound ultimately to succeed; and by dint of taking more pains than usual Froude obtained the mastery of his pen, and for the last forty years of his life was a great though very careless artist in words.

The growing devotion to Carlyle was a little puzzling, and in the opinion of some keen though unfriendly critics, who had good opportunities of



judging, not wholly free from affectation. His talk of "the piety of Oliver and the grandeur of Calvin" does not carry conviction with it. It was Carlyle's humour to fancy himself a Puritan, and he perhaps was one to this extent, that he would not allow anyone but himself a tirade against "old Jews' clothes"; but how did Froude squeeze himself into that galley?

The true Froude, that is, the Froude apart from his animosities and pet foes, is to be found in such passages as these:

"We should draw no horoscopes; we should expect little, for what we expect will not come to pass. Revolutions, reformations—those vast movements into which heroes and saints have flung themselves, in the belief that they were the dawn of the millennium—have not borne the fruit which they looked for. Millenniums are still far away. These great convulsions leave the world changed, perhaps improved, but not improved as the actors in them hoped it would be. Luther would have gone to work with less heart could he have foreseen the Thirty Years' War, and in the distance the theology of Tübingen. Washington might have hesitated to draw the sword against England could he have seen the country which he made, as we see it now" (February, 1864; *Short Studies*, vol. i., p. 28).

"The mythic element cannot be eliminated out of history. Men who play leading parts on the world's stage gather about them the admiration of friends and the animosity of disappointed rivals or political enemies. The atmosphere be-

comes charged with legends of what they have said or done—some inventions, some distortions of facts, but rarely or never accurate. Their outward acts, being public, cannot be absolutely misstated; their motives, being known only to themselves, are an open field for imagination; and as the disposition is to believe evil rather than good, the portraits drawn may vary indefinitely, according to the sympathies of the describer, but are seldom too favourable. . . . Even where there is no malice, imagination will still be active. . . .

“To appreciate any single man with complete accuracy is impossible. To appreciate him even proximately is extremely difficult. Rulers of kingdoms may have public reasons for what they do, which at the time may be understood or allowed for. Times change, and new interests rise. The circumstances no longer exist which would explain their conduct. The student looks, therefore, for an explanation in elements, which he thinks he understands—in pride, ambition, fear, avarice, jealousy, or sensuality; and settling the question thus to his own satisfaction, resents or ridicules attempts to look for other motives. So long as his moral judgment is generally correct, he inflicts no injury, and he suffers none. . . .

“The tendency of history is to fall into wholesome moral lines, whether they be accurate or not, and to interfere with harmless illusions may cause greater errors than it aspires to cure. Crowned offenders are arraigned at the tribunal of history for the crimes which they are alleged to have com-

mitted. It may be sometimes shown that the crimes were not crimes at all, that the sufferers had deserved their fate, that the severities were useful and essential for some great and valuable purpose. But the reader sees in the apology for acts which he had regarded as tyrannical a defence of tyranny itself. Preoccupied with the received interpretation, he finds deeds excused which he had learnt to execrate ; *and in learning something which, even if true, is of no real moment to him, he suffers in the maiming of his perceptions of the difference between right and wrong* " (*The Divorce of Catharine of Aragon*).

The last book of his is his *Erasmus*—lectures delivered at Oxford from the chair to which he was appointed on the death of his bitter critic, Freeman, by Lord Salisbury, one of those very Neo-Catholics Froude so heartily abhorred. Froude felt no obligations to his patron, and with the shades of the prison-house gathering round him, set to work at his old task with all his old vigour. He took as his text the letters of Erasmus, and selecting from them those passages which most interested him as he read them, translated them from the Latin into racy English, passing upon them as he went along his familiar commentary. The result is a most fascinating volume. Erasmus seems alive once more. Whether Froude's Erasmus is the true Erasmus is, of course, matter of controversy. All Mr. Froude would ever have said is, " It is my notion of Erasmus. What is *yours* ? " Good history or bad, it is a blow in the face of Neo-Catholicism, and perhaps that is all Mr. Froude ever meant it to be.

Personal controversy Mr. Froude avoided. He seldom replied to his maddened foes. He made no great pretensions, and held himself aloof from professional authorism. He enjoyed country life and country pursuits, and the society of cultivated women. He has gone from us, leaving the fight in which he took so fierce a part still raging and unsettled. The ranks are closing up, and his old place already knows him no more.

## DR. JOHN BROWN.

(1901)

WHAT can be pleasanter than to see fire-new on the tables of Messrs. Hatchard and Mr. Bickers and the other venders of those somewhat doubtful articles of commerce new books, old friends, their insides as good as ever, however much their outsides may testify to the prevailing taste of the hour?

Little books are now very much the mode. Mr. Dent, with great cunning, has insinuated his tiny volumes into households who have always been too ready to take in a literal sense the scholar's *dictum*—a great book is a great evil. For my part, I should be sorry to have no folios in the library, though I can respect an octavo, and fool away my time comfortably enough with a duodecimo. Lower than this I am not willingly prepared to go, unless, indeed, I be at my devotions, and even then I greatly prefer a big Prayer-book, such a one as you may reverently handle when occupying a stall in some lofty choir, to a podgy little thing apt to be stuffed out of all shape with extraneous, unlicensed and, indeed, illicit rhymed matter. But *de gustibus*, etc., and it was nothing but a “good joy,” to quote Mazzini's English, *ex relatione* Jane Welsh Carlyle, to find that

the writings of Dr. John Brown, the *Horae Subsecivae* of one's boyhood, have lately been reprinted in three volumes by Adam and Charles Black—volumes dainty enough for Queen Mab's library, if her Majesty has one, and yet printed in clear readable type.

The first good point about this particular Dr. John Brown is that he was not a Doctor of Laws, save *ex gratia*, or of Divinity though well read in those quarters, but of Medicine. We have far too few books by Doctors of Medicine. No doubt one of the four Evangelists was a physician, but the proportion has not been preserved.

Rabelais, it is true, was a Doctor of Medicine as well as a Monk of the Order of St. Benedict, and for a short while Curé of Meudon, and Rabelais is a library by himself. Our own Sir Thomas Browne, a true authòr if ever there was one, practised at Norwich; the great John Locke, worth cartloads of Germans, though never a doctor, was a Bachelor of Medicine, and once opened or advised the opening of an abscess in the chest of the false Achitophel; nor is any reader of *Horae Subsecivae* allowed to forget that Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, went his rounds as a country surgeon on a Welsh pony in the romantic lands watered by the Usk. Other names will occur at once—Dr. Mark Akenside, Sir Samuel Garth (Pope's "well natured Garth"), Dr. Armstrong, Sir Richard Blackmore, Dr. Byrom, of Manchester; but it will be admitted that Literature has not reaped as it should the harvest that ripens for its sickle in the fields of medical experience.

This then is one reason why Dr. John Brown is so agreeable—he is a Doctor of Medicine, and his ink-pot is a doctor's ink-pot.

A second reason is more controversial—Dr. Brown was a Scotsman. For a writer of Dr. Brown's humour and bent it was, I maintain it, a great advantage to belong as he did to a small and lettered country and to have imbibed with his mother's milk a great tradition—partly religious, partly literary, partly social. Nowhere else within these isles could he have done this. Read his account of his father, the secession minister, contained in the *Letter to John Cairns, D.D.*, and you will see at once what I mean. There was no such environment, no such atmosphere in England or Wales. It is intensely local, utterly untranslatable, Scotch to the core, and full of grace and charm, and piety and bookishness. The central paternal figure is sketched in with great firmness and force, and we see all the quick movements of the eager divine with pale face and dark eyes all aglow as were the eyes of Burns, though with a holier fire.

A secession manse was no bad place to be born in at the beginning of the last century. Dr. Brown writes of his father :

“ His living so much on books and his strong personal attachment to men, as distinct from his adhesion to their principles and views, made him as it were live and commune with the dead—made him intimate not merely with their thoughts and the public events of their lives, but with themselves—



Augustine, Milton, Luther, Melancthon, George Herbert, Baxter, Howe, Owen, Leighton, Barrow, Bunyan, Philip and Mathew Henry, Dodderidge, Defoe, Marvell, Locke, Berkeley, Haliburton, Cowper, Gray, Johnson, Gibbon and David Hume, Jorten, Boston, Bengel, Neander, etc., not to speak of the Apostles and, above all, his chief friend, the author of the Epistle to the Romans, whom he looked on as the greatest of them. With all these he had personal relations as men, he cordialized with them. He had thought much more about them—would have had much more to say to them had they met than about or to any but a very few living men. He delighted to possess books which any of them might have held in their hands, in which they had written their names. He had a number of these, some very curious; among others, that wild soldier man of fashion and wit among the reformers, Ulric Von Hutten's autograph on Erasmus's beautiful folio Greek Testament and John Howe's on the first edition of Milton's speech on Unlicensed Printing. He began collecting books when he was twelve, and he was collecting up to his last hours. . . . His collection of Greek Testaments was, considering his means, of great extent and value, and he had quite a singular series of books, pamphlets and documents referring not merely to his own body, the Secession, with all its subdivisions and reunions, but to Non-conformity and Dissent everywhere, and indeed to all human liberty, civil and religious, in every form—for this after the great truths, duties, and expectations of his faith was the one master passion of

his life—liberty in its greatest sense, the largest extent of individual and public spontaneity consistent with virtue and safety. He was in this as intense, persistent as Sydney, Locke, or old Hollis.”

Clustered round this central figure are lifelike sketches of other divines—Presbyterian, it is true—but full of a strength and virtue, a racy, national charm, to which our Episcopalian Church here in England has been almost a stranger since it got rid of the Non-Jurors at the Glorious Revolution, sending them with all their primitive piety and enormous learning about their business, as it had previously done to the Puritans at the Blessed Restoration, the Loyalists during the Great Civil War, and the old Religionists during the Reformation. But of Ebenezer Brown, the Seceder Minister at Inverkeithing, who refused to see Brougham and Denman “before sermon,” of Dr. Belfrage of Slateford, both minister and doctor, of Dr. Henderson of Galashiels, of Dr. Heugh, it were too long to write. They are all lapped in lead, and their successors, good men and true though they be, have had very different educations, hold very different beliefs, and lack that particular charm, that local colour, which Dr. Brown was able in this delightful letter to John Cairns, D.D., to catch and reproduce for our benefit.

The masterpiece of *Horae Subsecivae* is no doubt “Rab and his Friends.” This immortal short story emphasizes Dr. Brown’s strong points. First, nobody but a Doctor of Medicine could have written

it. One shudders to think what a hash a Doctor of Divinity must have made of the story. Secondly, its author was of necessity a Scotsman. The whole setting of the tale required this sacrifice. Thirdly, none but a dog-lover, born, confirmed, and established, could have made a dog the hero of a story so full of human suffering ; whilst no-one but a true lover of man, as well as of beast, could have compassed the feat of making the tearful tragedy of Ailie and her devoted husband hang so naturally round the neck of the mighty Rab.

It is, indeed, a faultless tale. I thought so when I first read it *ætat* 10, and had to run all over the house to find somebody to tell me the pronunciation of the strange word *chloroform*, then encountered for the first time ; and I think so still, though since the date of its first reading

“ Forty winters have besieged my brow.”

“ Marjorie Fleming ” was an astounding bit of good fortune to cross the path of any literary gentleman. All that had to be done was to get out of the little witch’s way, and leave her alone to weave her own spells. Dr. Brown is not to be blamed severely for over-acting the part of a showman, though he peeps up far too much with his notes of admiration and terms of endearment. The temptation was irresistible. Still he should have resisted it more sternly than he did.

Marjorie Fleming has now come into her own. Twenty years ago she was a Wordsworthian maiden singing a solitary song, whom there were very few

to praise, and as for lovers hardly more than she had in her lifetime :

“ Yesterday a maarade man, Mr. John Balfour, Esq., offered to kiss me and offered to marry me, tho’ the man was espused and his wife was present and said he must ask her permission. But he did not ; I think he was ashamed, and confronted before 3 gentlemen, Mr. Jobson and 2 Mr. Kings.”

Now it is different, and only yesterday I discovered in a new Anthology, edited by Mr. Lucas, Marjorie Fleming figuring away in an Index of Authors in company with Herrick and Shakespeare and Blake and Lamb and I know not who else. There she sits in her own right by virtue of her “ Ephibol on my dear love, Isabella,” and her “ Sonnet to a Monkey,” an excellent choice. My favourite lines, however, are from a poem on Mary Queen of Scots :

“ There is a thing that I must tell,  
Elizabeth went to fire and hell ;  
He who would teach her to be civil,  
It must be her great friend, the devil.”

These three volumes will be found to contain a great deal of excellent miscellaneous reading, enlivened with notes and most agreeable quotations. Very little shows signs of decay. Some medical papers, squeezed out in 1862, when their author compressed the two series of *Horae Subsecivae* into one volume, now reappear. I at least welcome them—for I greatly prefer Dr. Brown’s Medicine to his Art

—his pestle to his palate. I wish the “ Art ” had been squeezed out in 1862, never to reappear.

If there is such a thing as a Scotch prejudice, I should take it to be a lingering admiration for Wilkie’s “ John Knox Preaching.” Dr. Brown greatly admired this picture. On the other hand, another Scotsman, Carlyle, tells us that whenever his eye caught sight of a print of it in a shop window, he hurried by, looking hard in the opposite direction. So, you see, there is no such thing as a Scotch prejudice.

Dr. Brown was a man much beloved. He died in 1882. The latter years of his life were overshadowed by melancholy, frequently so great as to drive him into complete retirement. Humour is a high-priced commodity.

## TWO JUDGES OF YESTERDAY.

### I.—SIR JAMES BACON.

(JUNE, 1895)

TWENTY years ago it was generally believed by the very junior members of the Chancery Bar, now for the most part grizzled, disappointed, and highly agreeable old fellows, that the Vice-Chancellor Bacon—the dreaded edge of whose tongue was apt to make the Saturday morning's breakfast of the fledgling barrister an uneasy meal, as he thought of his long "short cause"—had been in Paris in 1814, with the Allied Sovereigns, not indeed as one of themselves, but in the hardly less interesting capacity of a newspaper reporter. I have no reason for believing this tale to be true; but it is worth repeating as indicative of the deep interest always taken by the Bar in the life and adventures of the distinguished lawyer who passed away the other day in his ninety-eighth year. Though the last of the Vice-Chancellors, Sir James was older than his office; the first Vice-Chancellor of England, Sir Thomas Plumer, having been appointed in 1813, when Bacon was already fifteen years old; whilst the three Vice-Chancellors, of whom Bacon was the

last, were first called into existence in 1851, when Sir James was past middle life.

Sir James Bacon was not what is technically called either a great judge or a strong judge. Had he been raised to the Bench at fifty, he would certainly have become a strong judge, and might have become a great one ; but at seventy-two, which was Bacon's age when he gave up advocacy for the judicial office, a man can hardly be expected to set to work to make a great reputation all afresh. Sir James was remarkably quick-witted and clear-headed, and he not unnaturally relied on these qualities to see him through his day's work, and was at no pains at his time of life to acquire those other qualities of industry and patience, to which he was content to remain, for the residue of his days, a good deal of a stranger.

Sir James Bacon was a master of style who never uttered a hazy sentence or led up to a doubtful conclusion. If he saw a thing at all he saw it plainly and expressed it without equivocation. No suitor ever left Bacon's court without knowing what His Honour had been at. Lucidity he loved, and, had the choice been presented him, he would, I am sure, have preferred to be clear and wrong than to be turbid and right. Legal vanity he had none. The Court of Appeal might reverse his decrees, but they could not upset his temper. There was no need to glide gently over the fact that three Judges had differed with him. He loved to emphasize the difference. "I thought I was right," he would say, "but three Judges have told me I was wrong." Nor



had he any silly old-world attachments to superseded forms. He loyally administered anything the Legislature set before him. Shortly after the Judicature Act of 1873, one of his chief clerks came to Bacon in some distress, wanting to know what he should do in a case that seemed unprovided for by the new rules. Bacon's advice was : " Do exactly what the new rules tell you to do ; when they are silent, do exactly what you used to do before."

So long as Bacon sat upon the Bench the English language had a friend and an avenger. The last of the Vice-Chancellors had a most expressive countenance, but the feeling it expressed best was disgust, and never did it express disgust better than when any one pleading before him had been beguiled into a vulgarism. On one occasion one of his leaders had used the expression, " on the carpet." Bacon looked unutterable things, and the counsel, trembling for his costs, hastily said, " I see your lordship does not like the expression ; I will withdraw it." " But you can't," groaned the Vice-Chancellor. " You can't. You might perhaps *roll it up*." To " finance " a company or to " exploit " anything whatsoever, were dangerous undertakings in Bacon's court. Next to solecisms and vulgarisms he hated beards, and took no pleasure in arguments proceeding from hirsute lips. " Go back to your chambers and take off that ugly mask. Return here and conduct your case decently," was his fierce injunction to a bearded barrister. The kindest of men, Sir James hardly recognized what a tongue he had, and undoubtedly he often gave an unnecessary amount

of pain. Some of his savage sayings still linger in old men's minds, but they may be allowed to die a natural death.

His wit was genuine and most unaffected. Easily bored, he hated prolonged discussions, and at the termination of one case which had lasted seven days he began his judgment in these words—"This case has taken longer than it took God Almighty to make the whole world." To a young barrister, who gave it as his excuse for pausing for a moment in an argument to which Bacon was most ostentatiously not paying the least attention, that people were talking to one another all about him, Sir James burst out, "Is anybody talking? I'm not talking. I have got nobody to talk to—would to God I had."

Sir James Bacon had a lively literary taste and a great knowledge of books. His backward-going memory was sometimes startling. In the course of a case before him concerning the title of a novel, a junior triumphantly referred to the fact that the title in question had been used long, long ago by an entirely forgotten author. "Excuse me," said Sir James, "I remember the appearance of the work you refer to perfectly well. It had considerable popularity, though, no doubt, the subsequent publication of the Waverley novels interfered with its vogue."

Members of the Junior Chancery Bar who feared that the brightness of their legal careers might be dulled, if not wholly obliterated, by the suspicion of letters, took great comfort in the report that, in the early days of the century, the Vice-Chancellor had

freely consorted with wits, and was once entirely at his ease in the green-room. How much truth lay behind this cheering report I cannot say ; but it certainly is recorded that on more occasions than one Bacon held junior briefs in literary and dramatic cases with the amiable and accomplished Talfourd—a master of florid forensic eloquence, the author of *Ion* and other tragedies, the sworn friend and admirer, and the first biographer of Charles Lamb, the parliamentary hero of the famous Copyright Act of 1842, and eventually a Judge of the old Court of Queen's Bench, dying, indeed, in the discharge of his public duty in the Assize Court at Stafford. Talfourd was a man to whom the phrase of Thiers (which so struck the grim fancy of Carlyle)—*alors célèbre*, pre-eminently applies. Talfourd was in the habit, in his double capacity of lawyer and man of letters, of giving evening parties, which were always well attended by young barristers, poets, and dramatists, all with their futures before them. Lord James of Hereford still preserves, in his old and honoured age, not only a pleasant, and even respectful memory of these gatherings, but also quite a *quantum suff.* of bookishness there acquired. I would not like to say that Bacon was an *habitué* of the Talfourd *salon*, for he was, I suspect, from the beginning a man very easily bored, but that he had the *entrée* who can doubt ?

The Vice-Chancellor had certainly met, and entertained a lively recollection of Charles Lamb, but it would be untrue to say that he was an enthusiastic worshipper at that now happily well-frequented

shrine; for once when a youthful admirer was extolling the virtues of St. Charles, Bacon admonished him as follows: "I am an old man and have broken all the commandments, save one—I have never committed idolatry. In that single respect you will do well to follow my example."

Yet there was nothing cynical about Bacon. He was no mean draughtsman, was an excellent caricaturist, delighted in music and the drama, and was beloved by all who lived within his personal influence. The only thing he did not seem to enjoy was sitting still listening to legal arguments, which he had to do for sixteen years of his life. But, after all, sixteen out of ninety-eight is not much.

*Note.*—On one occasion in a Nuisance Case the old Vice-Chancellor drew on his Notes a startling picture of a man with an amazing long nose, but the only record of his evidence was, "This witness said he could smell nothing."

## II.—LORD BRAMWELL.

(1899)

LORD BRAMWELL was a queer fellow, and he has got a queer biography.\* We have never met with anything quite like it before, and should very much like to know what Mr. Fairfield's ideas of the *genus*

\* *Some Account of George William Wilshere, Baron Bramwell, and his Opinions.* By Charles Fairfield: Macmillan

book and the *species* biography may chance to be. The volume is intituled on the outside, *A Memoir of Lord Bramwell*, and contains in all 373 pages ; but of these it is to exaggerate to say that five-and-twenty are devoted to biographical matter. Nor are these five-and-twenty pages models of lucidity, for it requires a little digging and delving on your own account to learn from them that the Judge's grandfather was one John Bramwell, of Penrith, who died in 1790, and his father one George Bramwell, who became head-clerk and ultimately partner in the banking firm of Dorrien, Magens, Dorrien and Mello, of 22 Finch Lane, in the City of London, in which respectable place of business George William Wilshere Bramwell was born June 12, 1808. His first school was Dr. Reddy's at Camberwell, where he had Baron Channell for a mate ; at the age of twelve he went to Dr. May's Academy at Enfield, where he remained until he was sixteen, when he was taken into the bank. This brings us down to 1824. In the bank he remained for six years, living with his father on the premises. On one occasion his father wrote from Margate announcing his return home by seven o'clock and asking for a rump steak and stewed eels for supper. This perhaps is not romantic—Finch Lane, Margate, and stewed eels—yet the next thing we hear is that, in 1830, Bramwell, very much against the wishes of his family, but completely in accordance with his own, married a Spanish lady, a daughter of Bruno Silva, who died in 1836. Bramwell's second marriage is nowhere mentioned.

In the year of the romantic marriage, the bank was

given up for the law, and in the chambers of Mr. Kelly, afterwards a loquacious, picturesque, and somnolent Chief Baron, Bramwell set to work to acquire the mystery of special pleading—a craft the very name of which would now be utterly forgotten, the thing itself having disappeared, were it not that the British public, both in Parliament and the press, has adopted the words as a synonym for dishonest argument—an even completer misnomer than Palestine soup!

Bramwell found the study of the law very interesting, and to his credit be it said, managed to make it interesting to others for more than half a century. His mind never grew jaded. In 1838 he was called to the Bar. As to the details of his life in London Mr. Fairfield has nothing to tell us. We are not even told where he lived. However, he got on, for in 1841 he was doing a good business on the Home Circuit. In 1850 he was appointed a member of the Common Law Procedure Commission; in 1851 he took silk. In 1856 he succeeded Parke at the Exchequer; in 1867 and 1868 he sat on two important Commissions on the Neutrality and Naturalization Laws; in 1876 he became a Lord Justice of Appeal; in 1881 he retired, and was entertained at a famous and crowded dinner in the hall of the Inner Temple; in 1882 he was made a peer on Mr. Gladstone's recommendation, and until his death in 1892 he added strength and lustre to the Court of Ultimate Appeal. He was fond of bathing, of billiards, of music, of his own fireside, and of writing letters to the *Times*.



This is all that his biographer has to tell us of one of the most remarkable and interesting and original of all the Judges who have administered the law, without fear or favour, during the reign of Queen Victoria. I wish it had been more. But how does Mr. Fairfield accomplish his three hundred and seventy-three pages? Has he pillaged the Law Reports? No. I wish he had, for Baron Bramwell's famous dilemmas are excellent sport for all, save those whose doom it was to be impaled on one or other of their horns.

I mentioned just now that Bramwell was fond of writing letters to the *Times*, chiefly on economical subjects, and it is with these epistles that Mr. Fairfield has filled his pages. No need to grumble. If anybody's letters to the *Times* are to be republished, let them be Lord Bramwell's—vigorous, intelligible, instructive, and, though chokeful of personality, strike no note of peevish egotism.

This biographer has one method of keeping his readers awake which may be recommended. His style is curt. *E.g.*, "Railway construction and industrial expansion, due to free trade, were causes at that epoch of much commercial litigation. Mr. Bramwell profited by the new business. Became a power with judges and juries at the Guildhall. City solicitors believed in him."

Lord Bramwell's biographer is also a man of cordial dislikes. He rejoices (he admits unnecessarily) that Bramwell never came under "Jowett's influence," which certainly would have been a remarkable chronological feat; he refers to the



"latest prize prig from Balliol duly sand-papered and lacquered by the 'Master';" he has a horror of the Canon Law and of something he or his printer twice calls the *jus genti*; and generally he is an amusing commentator, though not precisely the one Lord Bramwell would have chosen to edit his letters to the *Times*.

Lord Bramwell, we gather from Lord Coleridge's letters, was a free-thinker in religion—if so, he made up for it by his orthodoxy in the old Political Economy. Do you ask his creed? Take it in the words of M. Molinari—"Notre Evangile se résume en quatre mots—Laissez-Faire, laissez passer."

"Govern as little as possible. Leave people alone. A man's best friend is a well-filled purse. His worst, an Act of Parliament. There is nothing sacred about anything. Private property is not sacred; it is only expedient; but, being expedient, it must be maintained with all its consequences. Man is a bargaining animal. Leave him alone to make his own bargains, be they wise or foolish. It is outrageous to interfere with the liberty of bargaining. 'Forcing' [I cease to paraphrase]. What is the meaning of that? How can a *contract* be forced on a man? How can Mr. —, a lawyer, use such an expression? How can he, an economist, use it? Does he not know that what advantages the workman is to have in wages and otherwise is regulated not by the will of the master but by the 'higgling of the market' for labour? Does he not know that if the master gives more in one way he *must* give less

in others ? I say *must*—to get his fair profit and compete with others.”

Brave old man ! There he stands, bold and erect, repeating his *Credo*—“ I believe in the Higgling of the Market, in Fair Profit and Fierce Competition, To the End of the World, Amen.” We have all our creeds ; Lord Bramwell had his, Lord Halifax has his, and so on. Such a man being very much alive in 1885 was bound to come into collision with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, then busily engaged in promulgating his ideas about the Land. “ What has been the poor man’s portion ? ” exclaimed the People’s Friend, speaking at the Dudley Road Board School, Birmingham, just before a general election.

“ The poor people had rights over the commons ; they were able to get fuel, they were able to cut turf, they were able to support sometimes a cow, sometimes it was geese or poultry, and in that way they were able to add to their small incomes and make altogether a tolerable livelihood. Well, between the years 1800 and 1845 in a landlord’s parliament, in which the landowners had almost a paramount influence, there were no fewer than 2,000 private Acts of Parliament passed for the enclosure of these commons, and 7,000,000 of acres were thus enclosed—7,000,000 acres that previously belonged to the community, and over which there were public rights, became private property.”

Fine words, though vague. To transcribe them in

1899 is a labour of love. But they made the old lawyer very angry :

“ Save that it is true that the Acts were passed and the enclosures made, the whole of the above is untrue, every part of it. The land did *not* belong to the community in any sense ; there were no public rights over it except roads and paths, the poor people had no rights over these commons, none to get fuel, cut turf, nor support the cow, geese, or poultry.”

The lie direct ! Mr. Chamberlain, after Lord Bramwell’s letter to the *Times*, referred to him in a speech at Evesham as one of the most dogmatic and arbitrary judges that ever sat on the bench. Mr. Chamberlain then read out loud a little bit out of Mill, and added :

“ I venture to say we shall have to teach Lord Bramwell and men like him that there are rights of the poor as sacred as, etc.”

It would, indeed, have been delightful to see Mr. Chamberlain teaching Lord Bramwell the sacred rights of the poor and the law of Real Property, but it was ordained otherwise, and Mr. Fairfield tells us :

“ Notwithstanding this newspaper controversy the relation between the disputants became cordial in subsequent years.”

Mr. Gladstone was certainly the *causa causans* of many strange friendships and odd alliances.

Another subject that made Lord Bramwell almost as angry as Mr. Chamberlain's loose talk about stray geese and poultry was the outcry made in the press when the judges and few remaining serjeants wound up the ancient Society of Serjeants' Inn, and after selling its property, proceeded to put the price in their own individual pockets. Mr. Fairfield in his quaint way suggests that what made the people angry was the thought that a place should be sold to the highest bidder where in 1837 one of the Pollock family was born ; but this suggestion I take to be made facetiously. Lord Bramwell trampled on the public sentiment. He had paid £450 to become a serjeant ; the society was a private one ; duties it had none to God or man ; powers it had none ; any privileges it may once have possessed had long since vanished ; it never was connected with any Inn of Court or of Chancery ; and as for legal education, it had never given the subject a thought. So said Lord Bramwell ; but the world, which has a very high standard of conduct for judges, was only half convinced, and could not but notice that the only equity lawyer who chanced to be a serjeant gave his share of the booty to the Barristers' Benevolent Association. Lord Bramwell's last speech in the House of Lords was on the subject of picketing—a thing he abhorred, since unless it inspired terror it was not picketing. In the course of this speech he said :

“ You could not put down trades unions if you would, and I for one would not ; on the contrary, I take the liberty of saying before your lordships what I have said before in open court—if I were a working man I should be a unionist. I think that trades unions are useful institutions, and I would strike for good cause. You cannot get rid either of trades unions or of strikes.”

Brave old man ! *Ultimus Romanorum*, we bid thee a last and an affectionate farewell.

# THE FIRST SUPPLEMENTAL VOLUMES OF THE DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY.

(1901)

A DICTIONARY of Biography, be it in sixty volumes or six hundred, can never be complete even for a week. It may include Zoffany, but complete even in the sense in which Johnson's Dictionary may be said to be complete, it can never be. The three supplemental volumes lately issued by Smith, Elder and Co. to the great work, due to the enterprise and generosity of the late head of their firm, are proof alike of the heroism of the effort to achieve completeness and its impossibility. The editor and his associates have panted after the Angel of Death but in vain. They fixed a date, the death of Queen Victoria, January 22, 1901, as the furthest limit of their supplemental efforts. "Any person," says the editor, almost in the language of a notice board, "dying at a later date than the Queen is disqualified for notice." Poor fellows, they have escaped rates and taxes, but they cannot enter into the Kingdom of National Biography—at least, they must wait in their limbo for a decade or two. Somewhat

mournfully does the editor, in a prefatory note, record the names of thirty-eight persons who, but for the almost disloyal prolongation of their lives for six months beyond the date of their sovereign's demise, would have been included in the recent Supplement. As it is, they, these thirty-eight, are not there, being excluded by a rule. It was inevitable; no slight was intended. A Dictionary of Biography can never be complete. Of the sixty-three volumes composing the original issue, the publication of which extended over fifteen happy years, good opinions abound. To express any other opinion would be ill-tempered, fractious, and indeed churlish. The Dictionary is a great work, nobly planned and well executed, and free from taint of commercialism. It fulfils all the qualifications of a book for the library; it is good to skim, good to study, good to refer to. It will add to your knowledge, refresh your knowledge, and verify your knowledge. It will save time, hours of the time and very often pounds of the money of the writer of books. The only person it can injure is the miscellaneous writer, who in pre-dictionary days could occasionally turn an honest penny by collecting a few stray facts about some departed worthy, some notable obscurity, and make a magazine article out of them, thereby feeding his young or replenishing his tobacco pouch. Now it is all in the Dictionary.

Faultless the Dictionary is not; but for the most part its faults will remain undiscovered save by a few experts to whom their discovery will afford an almost infinite delight; and as experts have few



pleasures and of necessity lead dreary lives—for who would willingly associate himself with an expert?—we are disposed to think that this quality of the Dictionary ought to be included among its many merits.

In the obscurer paths of history, and all her paths are badly lighted, the pale student sometimes encounters two nobodies of the same name and period; slender indeed is the record of known or even reported facts against either, but, so it is darkly rumoured, on at least one occasion, and in one place, the great Dictionary has blundered in attributing the record of one of these nobodies to the other, each be it remembered bearing the same name. When two experts meet, great is their felicity over this blunder—so great that for the moment they forget their mutual hatred and contempt.

The Dictionary's sins of commission are, perhaps, as few as the infirmities of Nature would permit. Omission is another matter. You must omit—yet who is to be omitted? No exact test is possible. It is not lack of merit that must exclude, else Titus Oates would not be in Volume 41; it is not mere notoriety that will include, else every murderer would be found *sub nomine*. Murderers you must have, and bruisers, and jockeys, and breeders of shorthorns, and members of Parliament, but not all—by no means all—yet which?

No literary, historical, or philosophical test is possible. It is in vain to try to find one for such a heap of heroes, rogues, and dullards as are to be found in this great Dictionary. The only test is a

practical one, and it is admirably rendered in the prefatory note to the first of these supplemental volumes: "The right of a person to notice in the Dictionary has been held to depend on the probability that his career would be the object of intelligent inquiry on the part of an appreciable number of persons a generation or more hence."

This is sound dictionary lore. It is vague, of course. What is intelligent inquiry as distinguished from vain curiosity? What is an appreciable number of persons? How are you to distinguish between the curiosity of the next generation and that of succeeding generations?

This last question directly bears on these supplemental volumes, which, of course, are full of names recently borne, about whom therefore a certain measure of curiosity is widely if thinly spread. In one's contemporaries one is always interested. The mere fact that you have seen a man makes him at least sufficiently interesting to render fifty lines about him readable matter.

To test these tests I take up the first of these supplemental volumes, which rightly contains in its fore-part a short memoir of the giver of the feast, the late Mr. George Smith. Mr. Smith was the sort of man Dr. Johnson would have loved to praise. He raised the price of literature and made a fortune for himself. He had courage and faith, and could combine generosity with book-keeping. It is men like these who do good and accomplish great things. All who in days to come use the Dictionary will be well disposed to bless the memory of George Smith for

somewhat of the same class of reasons as have invoked blessings on the head of General Wade and other road-makers. This Dictionary is a great highway through English history and literature, and Smith and his navvies made it.

In this volume, as, indeed, in all the others, it is impossible not to be struck with the number, interest, and importance of the notices of soldiers who in India and elsewhere have led lives of combined daring and usefulness. Military biography, even when it exists in the accustomed shape, is apt to be too technical for popularity, unless it be the biography of some chance warrior who has the fortune, good or bad, to take the public taste. The world knows little of its greatest soldiers.

The first name in the first volume is that of Augustus Abbott, the second is Frederick Abbott, and the third is James Abbott—three brothers who all won fame in India. Augustus in his twenty-first year commanded a battery of two eighteen-pounder guns, built on the counterscarp of a ditch during the siege of Bhartpur. He held the battery for three weeks without relief. He was present with his men at the assault and capture of Ghazni in July, 1839, and occupied Kabul in August. His career in India, where he earned the name of its finest artilleryman, ended in 1859. It is only in the Dictionary that the lay reader has any chance of becoming acquainted with such brave departed heroes as these Abbotts.

Old Cambridge men will read with pleasure the notice of Professor Adams, the astronomer, and

joint discoverer with the illustrious Leverrier of the planet Neptune. Adams was a true son of Cambridge, not addicted to lecturing on any subject, but whose name and memory seem to become a tradition of accuracy, honesty, excellence, and simplicity. Two of the pleasantest things in our day are things that did not happen. Adams did not quarrel with Leverrier over Neptune, and Wallace did not quarrel with Darwin over the origin of species. Adams declined a knighthood and the office of Astronomer Royal.

Turning over the pages we come across the name of Lady Marian Alford, and are forcibly reminded of the different ways in which influence is wielded. For many years Lady Marian Alford radiated kindness, promoted refinement, and maintained dignity. She loved art, and was qualified to criticize it. She loved good society, meaning by that dubious phrase the society of men and women of birth and breeding, of taste and refinement, and in their company her conversation was of unrivalled excellence. In the London of to-day, where vulgar people of all ranks jostle shoulders together, and where a game of cards has destroyed intelligent intercourse, there is no longer room, save in a Dictionary, for a Lady Marian Alford.

William Allingham, the poet ; Henry Allon, the Independent Minister, and Sir James Allport, the manager of the Midland Railway, follow one another in rapid succession. The present writer knew all three. How far future generations will be curious to know about them it is impossible to say.

Some of Mr. Allingham's verses are not likely to be quite forgotten. Mr. Allon's published sermons are hardly likely to be read, whilst Allport's great achievement was the abolition of the second class passenger on the Midland Railway. However, there they are in the Dictionary taking their chance.

Three other A's we see looming through the fog—Fred Archer, the jockey; Lord Armstrong, the maker of big guns and compiler of huge fortunes; and Matthew Arnold, poet and critic. Of these men, the jockey was probably the widest known at the date of his death. He was the second son of "Billy" Archer, a jockey of the old school, who early apprenticed the promising boy to Matthew Dawson, the famous Newmarket trainer. Jockeys begin early. Fred Archer, when fifteen years old and scaling 5 st. 7 lb., won the Cesarewitch on the back of Salvano, and two years later, seated on Atlantic, he won the Two Thousand Guineas. Archer's *annus mirabilis*, his third of September, was 1885, when, as the Dictionary tells us, he won the Two Thousand Guineas on Paradox, the Oaks on Lonely, the Derby on Melton, the St. Leger on the same horse, and the Grand Prix on Paradox. What crowned hours! Who need be reminded that he also won the Derby in 1880 on Bend Or, snatching the victory with a mighty rush from Robert the Devil! He is said (we still quote the Dictionary) to have worn silk 8,084 times, and to have ridden 2,748 winners. "Where is your Wully Gladstone now?" is an exclamation that might easily have come to the lips of many, when poor Fred Archer, who shot

himself in a fit of depression, was buried at Newmarket, the Downing Street of jockeys, on November 12, 1886. He was but twenty-nine. He left a large fortune behind him. He was a great popular favourite, and could he have had a public funeral, and his admirers been free to follow it, no other man's obsequies would have attracted such crowds.

Lord Armstrong is not likely to be forgotten. Without Armstrongs there can be no Bismarcks, without Bismarcks no empires. We live in days of great combinations of nations and trades, and great combinations must ultimately rest on great guns.

But in the long run, for the stern chase, my nominee for the Great Memory Stakes is Matthew Arnold. He will be remembered the longest of all the A's in this volume assembled, and the only B who will run him hard, and may beat him, is another poet his fastidious taste rejected—the poet Browning; though Bright and Bradlaugh may for different reasons prove stayers.

Few things can be pleasanter than to turn over the pages of such a Dictionary as this, waiting to be stopped until your eye catches the name of some author whose books you have chanced to read but about whose parentage, education, and life's story you know next to nothing. In these noisy days of literary newspapers and literary interviewers, publishers' puffing catalogues, illustrated with portraits, and communicated paragraphs, it is difficult to avoid knowing perhaps too much about authors still alive or of those who have recently ceased to publish.



Yet are there still some

“Delicate spirits pushed away  
In the hot press of the noonday,”

and although Mr. R. D. Blackmore was not “pushed away,” he was one of these delicate spirits. It is long since I have read anything so cool, refreshing, and delightful as the sketch of the author of *Lorna Doone* in the first of these supplemental volumes. It is full of peace, charm, and dignity. Blackmore’s favourite poets were Homer, Virgil, Milton, and among the moderns, Matthew Arnold. He was worthy of their company. He detested London, took no pleasure in dinner-parties, but cultivated grapes and pears with an unfailing assiduity. He was, so we read in the Dictionary, “an uncompromising Conservative in the social even more than in the political sense, and he cherished a scorn of all self-advertisement.” At one time of his life he practised the now half-decayed art of the conveyancer in Lincoln’s Inn.

What a different man was John Stuart Blackie—expansive, effusive, he simply could not keep at home! Rush about he must, and in flowing robes and picturesque garb. Yet he, too, was a good fellow. In his *Litania Nigelli* he prayed (among other things) to be delivered “from a Tory without sense, a Liberal without sentiment, and a Radical without reverence; from prejudice that blinds the truth, from sophistry that juggles with truth, from faction that poisons truth”; he prayed sincerely, for Blackie loved truth and nobility of soul.



A life that interests, whilst it horrifies, is that of the terrible Broadhead, who was as much a murderer as Thurtell or Palmer. I read with amazement that after an early marriage Broadhead developed studious tastes, " assiduously reading Shakespeare." If ever an author bade his readers steer clear of murder, and depicted the sovereignty of conscience, it is Shakespeare. I crave leave to doubt the sincerity of these alleged assiduous readings. In circles where reading is a rare habit, it takes little to obtain a spurious reputation for studentship. After a while Broadhead, who was brought up to be a Sheffield saw-grinder, became a publican, a vocation more usually associated with betting and horse-racing than with Trades Unionism. However, in 1849, Broadhead, whilst remaining a publican, became secretary to the Saw-Grinders' Union, a small body which grew both in numbers and wealth under the vigorous management of its new officer. The trade for a long time past had had a bad reputation for outrages and rattennings, and Broadhead's business was to make that reputation worse. He seems to have begun, as befitted a monster, with hiring three men to hamstring a horse, and then proceeded to attempt the murder of the horse's owner. It is hard to fancy such a man assiduously reading Shakespeare. After persistent efforts Broadhead finally succeeded in procuring the murder of James Linley, whilst gunpowder explosions and mutilations abounded. For more than a dozen years these infamies continued, till at last before Examiners who sat under a special Act of Parliament, Broadhead, to save his

neck, confessed many of his crimes. He received a Certificate under the Act, and met with no punishment save the public scorn, though his trade, with that strange perversion of feeling often noticeable in trades and professions, stuck to him for a season. He went to America, where, however, he did not thrive, and, shortly returning to Sheffield, kept a small grocer's shop till his death in 1879. Hardly the man to buy one's groceries from ; but life is complicated, and it takes all sorts to make a Dictionary of National Biography.

How are we to exorcise Broadhead ? Try Burton, not the famous brewer of the town of that name, but the still more famous traveller, Orientalist, and translator, Richard Francis Burton. Here, indeed, is matter for the reflections of many moods. We are not all woven of the same piece so long as Burtons are even occasionally produced. Burton was devoured by an endless curiosity. Although an officer in the Indian Army, he was content to wear the dress, talk the dialects, and live the lives of "niggers" in order to discover the secrets of the East. He was a Paracelsus in British uniform. He learnt Mahratti, Sindhi, Punjabi, Persian, and Arabic, in order that he might explore Mohammedanism to its innermost depths. In the disguises of a Persian Mirza, a Dervish, and a Pathan, Al-Haj Abdullah, *i.e.*, Richard Francis Burton, late of Trinity College, Oxford, and the British Army, made his solitary way to El Medenah and Mecca.

The services of men like Burton are invariably rejected by our military authorities, for our Army

has no more room for heroes than has our Church for saints, and it is therefore not surprising to read that Burton was refused both active service and prolonged leave. England was well described by Dr. Newman as the paradise of little men and the purgatory of great ones. Perhaps after all little men are the safest in the long run. For one thing, there are always more of them.

To trace Burton's wanderings is as impossible as it would be to record his writings. Africa knew him, both East and West; South America held him long enough to secure Camoens a translator; Syria sheltered him; and at Trieste he died.

Burton is best known to a world of gossip and scandal as the bold translator and very free annotator of the *Arabian Nights*, and as the husband of a high-spirited, if ill-advised lady, who loved him devotedly during his life, and burnt his manuscripts after his death.

The Dictionary tells us that Burton made a much-needed sum of money, £10,000, or thereabouts, out of his translation. Without entering upon any defence of Burton's moods and vagaries, it is safe to say that such men as he are the life and soul of Dictionaries of National Biography.

Should, however, Burton make us restless and dissatisfied with a stay-at-home existence, let us seek in the Dictionary an antidote—something that may reconcile us to dull streets, hackneyed professions, and the Anglican Episcopate. Turn to Mr. Richard Copley Christie—scholar and bibliophile—who, born at Lenton, in Nottinghamshire, was the son of a mill-

owner, "much respected in Manchester," and pursued for many years in that humid and smoke-buried city the profession of a conveyancer and equity draftsman. Here, indeed, is the humdrum; here, surely, are all the elements of dulness. But Christie, though undoubtedly a prosy speaker in the Palatine Court, as the present writer remembers, was never dull himself, for he led a scholar's life, and had the scholar's zest. He left 75,000 books behind him, all of his own collecting; whilst his famous Horace Library, containing all the editions that ever were of that poet, was in itself a joke of which he never grew weary. Christie was a happy man, and he wrote at least one really good book, his *Life of Etienne Dolet*, which is fit to stand side by side with the *Casaubon* of his old tutor, Mark Pattison. Though somewhat, so I always imagined, of a free-thinker, Christie became Chancellor of the Diocese of Manchester, an appointment in which he took great pleasure. Christie was a man to be envied.

Should we now be in search of a strain of personal piety, rare in Dictionaries, we can find it in the very next name to Christie's, which happens to be that of Richard William Church, Dean of St. Paul's. To be famous for a retiring disposition, for piety, purity, good sense, and general delightfulness, is a feat indeed, and yet Dean Church accomplished it simply by always being himself. He was one of the best arguments in favour of Christianity ever likely to be heard. You could without hyperbole say of him that his presence was the triumph of Anglicanism, and the sight of him an Atheist's confusion. Yet

he was not a saint, he was too shrewd and statesman-like for a saint. A bare record of the facts of the life of such a man as Dean Church can convey nothing of an influence which made itself felt by his countenance, his bearing, his conversation, and his writings.

Next to Church comes Churchill. Such are the humours of the alphabet !

It were absurd to pretend that there is not, for us, a noticeable difference between these supplemental volumes and the earlier ones.

For the most part the sixty-three volumes of the first issue told us about men and women long since dead ; whilst for the most part the supplemental volumes tell us about men and women who were walking in the streets in our own time. You cannot, therefore, fail in many instances to be conscious of shortcomings, of reticences, it may be of inaccuracies, and even, sometimes, of false judgments in these later records which you had no means of detecting in the earlier ones. It is seldom possible to describe in the barest outline a man after a fashion that will satisfy all who knew him. Had we known Johnson we might not be the admirers we are of Boswell. Personal knowledge is a disturbing element. It is, for example, a little surprising to be told that Lord Esher was essentially *Vir pietate gravis*, and that Sir James Bacon was one of the most courteous of judges. These are small matters, but they serve to illustrate my meaning. Had the same things been said about Lord Tenterden or Vice-Chancellor Shadwell, the present writer at all events must have remained silent, not knowing anything to the contrary.

It must not, however, be supposed that all the names recorded in these volumes are of new-comers to the "Vasty halls of death." We find a batch of Fourteenth Century Beauforts, whose claims, not very striking, must have been overlooked when the B's were first under consideration. It is humorously told of the late Mrs. Gladstone that she once forgot to invite every one whose name began with a C to one of her evening parties. Not a C was visible. It turned out that she had hurriedly stuffed her list of C's under the cushions of a sofa, and forgot all about it. Some such accident may have occurred to these Beauforts. Anyhow, their wrongs are now righted.

There were angry critics who asserted that the Bruisers of England were being kept out of the Dictionary. Such a slight was intolerable if intended. The editor seems to have thought there was something in the plaint, for I notice that he has sought to appease the "injur'd shade" of the mighty Belcher, who died in 1811, by the tardy insertion of his honoured name. Belcher, we are now told, "was in private life good-humoured, modest, and unassuming." A bishop could not be more, and if the Dictionary is to be believed, has often been less.

But the insertion of Belcher's name, good so far as it goes, will not satisfy the angry critics already mentioned. Where, they are already murmuring, is Ryan, known to all Borrovians as "Big Ben"? Where is Pearce, the Game Chicken, to whom a reference, covert, no doubt, but still a reference, is made in "Rab and his Friends"? and where is



Perry, the "Tipton Slasher," named outright by the bold Browning :

" And the cast from a fist (not, alas ! mine),  
But my master's, ' the Tipton Slasher ' " ?

All these heroes were once champions of England, no less than Jem Belcher, the modest and unassuming.

I wish to appease the anger of these critics. No Dictionary of National Biography can ever be complete, and after all the greatest of our Bruisers, Tom Cribb, has been from the very first in his own place in the thirteenth volume, between the first Lord Crewe and the Admirable Crichton ; although—and here I have to hint a fault—the biographer has failed to place on record a most moving anecdote told in Crabb Robinson's *Reminiscences* of what happened (I think in the year 1811) when Cribb, then Champion of England and a man of wide renown, paid a visit to the famous University of Cambridge, where the Noble Art of Self-defence has ever been held in the highest estimation, rivalling, if not excelling, both the *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium*, and hardly yielding pride of place to the *Scholæ Majores* of Medicine, Law, and Sacred Theology. This anecdote will be found in the first volume of the *Reminiscences*, p. 463.

It is no doubt right, though perhaps posterity may kick at the arrangement, that the two longest contributions to these supplemental volumes, which are intended to carry us down to the end of the Victorian era, should be the lives of Mr. Gladstone and the



great Queen whose First Minister Mr. Gladstone so frequently was. Her Majesty has one hundred and ten two-columned pages, whilst Mr. Herbert Paul, by a feat of masterly compression he must have learnt elsewhere than from his Gladstonian studies, has managed to follow W. E. G. from his cradle in Rodney Street, Liverpool, to his grave in the Abbey, in forty-eight like pages. The task of both biographers must have been a difficult, and to some extent a thankless, one, for it is one of the humours of a Dictionary of National Biography that the greater the name the less interesting the notice. Curiosity, ignorance, or, at all events, a lack of general information, are the motives that make men take down dictionaries. We are more anxious to read about Kyd or Greene than about Shakespeare in a dictionary; Colonel Wildman is more to our mind than Oliver Cromwell, in a dictionary—we are more likely in the Dictionary to turn up Tierney than Gladstone, and we search in the same quarter more eagerly for facts about Perkin Warbeck than we do about good Queen Victoria. When a life becomes a record of the time during which it was spent, biography seems swallowed up in history.

Of these two biographies, those who still dislike Mr. Gladstone will prefer the editor's Queen Victoria to Mr. Paul's sketch of the late Prime Minister, remarkably free as the latter is of any taint of partisanship. But neither the one nor the other, essential as it was to have both, represents the true spirit, purpose, and enchantment of this great, useful, and delightful work.

Hasty and ill-informed critics, among whom the present writer is reluctantly compelled to name himself, did not hesitate to accuse the original editor of the "palpable omission" from his twelfth volume of the interesting name of Eliza Cook, a poetess whose works, often bound uniformly with those of Shakespeare, Burns, and other bards, once enjoyed great popularity. How crushing is the rejoinder of the editor! In 1887, when the Cooks appeared in all their majesty in the twelfth volume, Eliza Cook, shorn, it is true, of the beams of her once great popularity, was still living at Wimbledon, in an honoured age. You may now read in the second of these supplemental volumes, how she was the youngest of the eleven children of a brazier (Mr. Dick's pet profession) in London Road, Southwark. Eliza Cook had a genuine vein of simplicity and affection, and deserved, though she proved unable to retain, the popularity of her girlhood. I once knew a Swede who learnt English, which he spoke exceedingly well, from Eliza Cook's poems, which he unhesitatingly preferred to those of Wordsworth. And a Swede's opinion is *une opinion comme une autre*. I am glad to notice that in 1863 Miss Cook received a Civil List pension of £100 a year. As a rule we treat our small poets exceedingly well.

Another and more famous Cook enriches the same volume—Thomas Cook, known to all tourists. His life, as told in the Dictionary, is one of extraordinary interest and even romance. There seemed nothing he could not organize. He is the true hero of the Nile, and the most successful of modern diplo-

mats, for he broke down the obstructiveness of both foreign and British railway managers, and did more to make the whole world one than all the statesmen who have ever floundered their hour in the Chanceries and Foreign Offices of Europe. He received the thanks of the army, was often consulted by statesmen when in their usual difficulties, made a large fortune, drank nothing but water, and lived and died a simple-minded Christian. The name of Thomas Cook, who left school at ten to help his widowed mother to keep a small shop in a Derbyshire village, is now honourably known in all quarters of the globe. A more "modern" career, one more smacking of his time, cannot be imagined. Cook was never a Cabinet Minister, or even a Privy Councillor, but it may be he was a truer Imperialist than even Mr. Cecil Rhodes.

One of the resplendent names of the third volume is John Ruskin's—the last of the great writers of the Victorian age. To this article all would turn with a huge curiosity were there anything left to be told; but for many a year Ruskin poured out his personality through all possible channels of communication. He left no subject untouched, least of all himself. He thundered and he lightened, he preached and he chattered—and always delightfully. The mysteries of high heaven, and the divers characters of his aunts; the Alps and his father's gouty brown sherry; all alike lent themselves to be described by his matchless English in passages dictated by his overpowering egotism. The attitude of his countrymen towards Ruskin was amusing. The *Times*

newspaper alternately ridiculed his doctrines and demanded his burial in Westminster Abbey. He was (it thought) so glorious an impostor, so supreme a humbug, so paradoxical a preacher, so false a reasoner, so dangerous a character that there was only one place for his bones—the Abbey. Great indeed is the fascination of genius. It unlocks every door, and the great world, so conscious of its own desperate dulness, will never consent to ostracize it. The future fate of Carlyle and Ruskin is, like all fate, certain but unknown, but what is now known is that they have already outlived their more orthodox contemporaries. This they have done, not because they were on the right side and their orthodox contemporaries on the wrong, but because they were men of genius and the others were humdrum. The truth that must ultimately prevail, so at least it is confidently asserted, will be independent of all modes of expression, and will neither be brilliant nor humdrum, but simply the truth—a pure effluent escaping from the tanks where rival *bacilli* have destroyed each other.

The original sixty-three volumes were, on the whole, cheerful reading. All men must die, but what a pleasure it is to be alive, with one's feet on the fender, the curtains drawn, any little weakness one happens to have well attended to; and the *Dictionary of National Biography* within reach. The most melancholy life, the hardest fate, if lived and endured long ago, does not, in the retrospect of the Dictionary, destroy a rational cheerfulness; for boisterous mirth I have no mind.

But these supplemental volumes sail too near the wind of our mortality. It is hard to be cheerful in turning over pages where you encounter such names as Arnold, Bowen, Lockwood, Sidgwick, and are reminded of happy evenings and delightful talks ; of wit, wisdom, and gaiety, once, at all events occasionally, within your reach and now gone for ever out of your life.

It was well enough with the old volumes ranged round you to gaze

“ On the ever full  
Eternal, mundane, spectacle,”

to read of births and deaths, of success and failure, of ill-health and disappointment, and all the countless vicissitudes of life, without more than an agreeable sense of the movement of things ; but suddenly to meet an old friend, with whom you have often sat at meat, by whose side you have tramped across the moors, by whose living words you have been moved, staring coldly at you out of the pages of a Dictionary of Biography, is quite another matter. Yet you soon grow reconciled to it.

“ Yes, thou art gone ! and round me too the night  
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade ;  
I see her veil draw soft across the day,  
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade . . .

“ And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,  
And near and real the charm of thy repose,  
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.”

## THE DEFAMATION OF GENIUS.

(1891)

THE vexed question of the boundaries between Genius and Insanity when investigated with learning and in a true scientific spirit deserves, and will always receive respect. When "glorious John" sang

"Great wits are sure to madness near allied,  
And thin partitions do their bounds divide,"

he was only saying in rhyme what had often been said before in prose in more languages than one. It would be easy by a display of that "index-lore that turns no student pale," though it amazes the simpletons who are ignorant of the crafty devices of the book-maker, to fill half a dozen pages with quotations from authorities, or, at all events, authors, in Greek, Latin, French, and English, who have rung the changes upon this theme. Were this to be done with the well-bred charm of Montaigne, or the grave, yet fantastic humour of Burton, no one need or would complain. "*Madness, phrensie, melancholy*," says the last-named, "are confounded by Celsus and many writers; others leave out phrensie and make madness and melancholy but one disease, which



Jason Pratensis especially labours ; ” and a little lower down the page he proceeds : “ The other species of this fury are *enthusiasms*, *revelations*, and *visions*, so often mentioned by Gregory and Beda in their works ; ” obsession or possession of devils, *Sibylline prophets* and poetical *furies*, such as come by eating “ noxious herbs, tarantulas stinging, etc., which some reduce to this. The most known are *lycanthropia*, *hydrophobia*, *chorus sancti Viti*.”

This perhaps is not science, but it is at all events agreeable literature and whiles away the time. But there is a disposition nowadays, amidst pseudo-scientists, to handle this same theme very disagreeably and after the most foolish fashion. Literature, poor dear, has long had to suffer so much from the tongues and pens of foolish professors of *belles lettres*, that one now begins to notice, with perhaps a tinge of malice, how her fashionable and “ well-put-on ” sister, Science, is beginning to be made not a little ridiculous by the cackling of geese at her heels, bred in her own barn-yards.

Nevertheless, Cesare Lombroso, a late professor of Legal Medicine at the University of Turin, is a little bit too bad to be borne. His book, the *Man of Genius*, has not even insanity to recommend it. The professor is hopelessly sane, and the attributes of his book are those well-known attributes of perfect sanity, dulness beyond belief, and stupidity beyond measure.

Like many other dull and stupid things this book affects to be terrible, to be horrible, to hold up a mirror in which abashed humanity may see her



frightful countenance. It is not so easy to be terrible. Our fingers may have tingled to box the professor's ears, but never does he succeed in making our flesh creep. Let him speak up for himself.

He begins by observing that Genius "has been classed by not a few alienists as on the confines of criminality, one of the teratologic forms of the human mind, a variety of insanity." His object is to establish a theory which he says has flourished for some years in the "psychiatric world," namely, that a large proportion of mental and physical affections are the result of degeneration—that is, approaching insanity—and that this degeneration is indicated by moral and physical defects. Amongst the moral defects the professor notes verbosity, vanity, excessive originality, and the tendency to put mystical interpretations on the simplest facts; and amongst physical defects he enumerates prominent (not lengthy) ears, deficiency of beard, irregularity of teeth, excessive symmetry of face and head, sexual precocity, shortness of stature, left-handedness, stammering, and rickets. The man's purpose is thus made plain from the first. Vanity, verbosity, originality, and the like—these are the faults of authors whose persons also have only too frequently been open to just animadversion. The professor scorns deception; he digs his pit in the open day, and having dug it, proceeds to tumble his victims into it one after another with the greatest rapidity. Having stated his theory, he proceeds to call his witnesses to prove it, and what a set they

are ! The great Jaggers would have scorned to put some of them into the box at the old Bailey. The lists of names with which the professor has bedizened his pages are of Homeric length. You must listen to one, reader, for it is really a curiosity : " Erasmus, Socinus, Linnæus, Lipsius, Gibbon, Spinoza, Haiüy, Montaigne, Mezeray, Lalande, Gray, John Hunter, Mozart, Beethoven, Goldsmith, Hogarth, Moore, Campbell, Wilberforce, Heine, Meissonier, Lamb, Beccaria, Maria Edgeworth, Balzac, De Quincey, Blake, Mr. and Mrs. Browning, Ibsen, George Eliot, Thiers, Louis Blanc, Mendelssohn, Swinburne, Van Does, Van Laer, Lulli, Pompinazzi, Boldoni, Piccerini, Baldo, Ficino, Albertus Magnus, and St. Francis Xavier." What on earth was the matter with this very various and partially damaged lot ? By what force-compelling theory did Gibbon and Hogarth, Wilberforce and Heine, Miss Edgeworth and Balzac, Ibsen and St. Francis Xavier get yoked together, even for a moment ? They were one and all, so at least Professor Lombroso alleges, degenerately short of stature. Here is another list, happily not so long : " Agesilaus, Tyrtæus, Æsop, Giotto, Aristomenes, Crates, Galba, Brunelleschi, Magliabechi, Parini, Scarron, Pope, Leopardi, Talleyrand, Scott, Owen, Gibbon (he is in nearly all the lists), Byron, Dati, Baldini, Moses Mendelssohn, Flaxman, and Hooke." Do you ask the fault of this gallery of heroes, wits, and nobodies ? The professor answers hurriedly " rickets," and passes on to the men of genius who have stammered. The list of great men who have committed suicide is " almost

endless." It begins with Zeno and reaches to Chatterton, Clive, Creech, Blount, and David. As for epilepsy, "Julius Cæsar, Dostoieffsky, Petrarch, Molière, Flaubert, Charles V., St. Paul, and Handel appear to have been all subject to epilepsy." In addition to these "there was a constant quiver on Thomas Campbell's thin lips."

Leaving the professor's wretched theory out of sight, what standard of comparison has he? What does he mean by a man of genius? What does he know of three-fourths of the names he bandies about and of which he makes so ungentlemanly a use? We should like to clap him in a class-room with ink and paper, but no books of reference, and compel him to state in writing all he knows of Maria Edgeworth, Tyrtæus, Hooke (with an "e"), Crates, Creech, St. Paul, Blount, and Haydon. This crowding and shuffling of names together and then dealing them out by the dozen is a sure sign of the ignoramus.

There is something particularly odious in the way this author picks up any and every little fact or incident he finds lying about and thrusts it into the structure of his book. He has read somewhere that Milton composed poetry with his head leaning over his easy chair. As a matter of fact, Milton did nothing so silly. The poetry he composed in bed at night he was accustomed to dictate during the day, sitting obliquely in his chair with one leg over the arm, a most rational attitude, and one we have seen adopted, with no loss of dignity, by a Judge on the bench. But let this pass, and suppose we are willing to assume that Milton did compose poetry

sitting, as alleged, what business is it of the professor's? His business is to observe that the attitude was "an instinctive method for augmenting the cerebral circulation at the expense of the general circulation"; or, in other words, that our great John Milton could not compose poetry unless his head was whirling round. Six strokes with a birch-rod would not be too heavy a punishment for such impertinence.

Abominable falsehoods are scattered freely about the professor's pages. We are told that Hogarth "conceived his grotesque scenes in a Highgate tavern after his nose had been broken in a dispute with a drunkard." Would he were alive again to conceive this professor. Mr. J. S. Mill is stated to have been seized with "an attack of insanity" in the autumn of 1826. Addison, Steele, Sheridan, Burns, are written down "confirmed drunkards." It is assumed as certain that Dumas tore his wife's hair off her head, that Byron beat Madame Guiccioli, and that Bulwer Lytton bit his wife. These and a hundred other calumnies, or at all events worthless stories, are paraded forth as sober proofs of a scientific theory. The only paragraph in the book which is wholly free from offence is the last, which conveys the unexpected but unimpeachable moral that we ought to be sorry for the insane and have no need to be envious of men of genius. The latter certainly have a great deal to put up with, but yet they have their reward, for we are not all Lombrosos, in the love or gratitude of mankind. The man we are most sorry for is poor Lucretian Creech, who

in the pre-Munro days had his uses, not wholly base, and who never set up to be a man of genius at all, but who yet is stuck into this disagreeable book simply because he committed suicide so long ago as June, 1700.

## A FOREIGN CRITIC OF BYRON AND WORDSWORTH.

(1905)

TIME writes many wrinkles on Criticism's clouded brow. It is indeed a dangerous pursuit. To think of Lord Jeffrey and Mr. Gifford is to shudder. But what of ourselves? Our foolish fancies, our pet aversions, our blinkered judgments, our grooves and ruts, and those untravelled tracts of our ignorance—to think of these is to shudder at the folly that still impels the critic's pen.

When, therefore, a foreigner has the enterprise and intellectual hardihood to essay the task of a domestic critic, and proceeds to value our home-produce at its world-price, we hasten to welcome him into our over-cultivated fields and bid him God-speed with his "poor crooked scythe and spade." His criticism will at least not be stale.

In the fourth volume of Mr. G. Brandes' (a Dane) interesting and most animated and accomplished work, *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* (Heinemann), the high-spirited author has a great deal to say about Byron and Wordsworth as they appeared to him in 1875 when the book was

first published in Denmark, and from this, it is made plain that, at all events in 1875, the Dane had not attained the composure of spirit with which here at home the Briton has learnt to regard the life and poetry of the first decade of the last century.

Years, with us, have brought the philosophic mind. We have grown discriminative, can make allowances, and are ready gently to "scan our brother man," even though he take the shape of King George III., or the likeness of Southey with a Laureate's crown. We decline any longer to be the slaves of dead men's passions or the mouthpieces of their furious prejudices.

"The epoch ends, the world is still."

This fiery Dane, however, does not, or at least did not in 1875, share our calm. He still pours himself out in a bygone strife and utters the cries of "battles long ago." The very name of the Holy Alliance is to him a call to arms. I wish I could have a copy of the book sent under cover to William Hazlitt, Esq. It would warm the cockles of his heart, unless he too has become a philosopher. It is with a boy's delight that Mr. Brandes quotes Byron :

"Shut up the bald-coot bully Alexander,  
Ship off the Holy Three to Senegal ;  
Teach them that 'sauce for goose is sauce for gander,'  
And ask them how *they* like to be in thrall."

Mr. Brandes proceeds ecstatically :

"What language ! What tones breaking the



death-like silence of oppressed Europe! The political air rang with the shrill notes; for no word uttered by Lord Byron fell unheard to the ground. The legions of the fugitives, the banished, the oppressed, the conspirators of every nation kept their eyes fixed upon the one man who amidst the universal debasement of intelligences and characters to a low standard stood upright, beautiful as an Apollo, brave as an Achilles, prouder than all the Kings of Europe together. Free in his quality of English Peer from molestation everywhere, he made himself the mouthpiece of the dumb revolutionary indignation which was seething in the breasts of the best friends and lovers of liberty in Europe." (P. 356.)

Mr. Brandes' hearty, honest, boyish delight in Byron's beauty and daring and rank and reckless wit, and his genuine pleasure in his lordship's poetry are significant things, particularly when they are contrasted, as they are in this volume, with his open dislike of Wordsworth's personality and his comparative indifference to Wordsworth's poetry.

Byron's poetry of late years has been what may be called in this mercantile age a deferred stock. Extinct volcanoes must always be at some disadvantage. Byron in his most outrageous mood no longer can frighten a fly. His blasphemies, his arraignments of High Heaven and of the Holy Alliance, his most terrific outbursts, strike the reader of to-day as crude, noisy, and unnecessary. Trained sceptics will have no difficulty in detecting the more than half-

convinced Calvinist under the robes of this new Prometheus. With great good nature Byron in the *Vision of Judgment* allows poor old King George to slip into Heaven at last.

“And when the tumult dwindled to a calm,  
I left him practising the hundredth Psalm.”

Lord Byron was quite capable of performing the same feat himself.

Byron had no philosophy ; no inward light. He was the creature of circumstances. But, then, what a creature, and what circumstances ! Despite his braggadocio, he was a true liberator, a genuine emancipator. Just as Napoleon, to the delight of Hazlitt, played a glorious game of bowls with the heads and thrones of the Legitimist Sovereigns, so, to the delight of all who, “suckled on a creed outworn,” longed to be free to speak their minds, Byron, as Cain, as Manfred, as Don Juan, thundered his wrath and sent out peal after peal of scornful laughter against all humbugs in high places whether called Gods, or Kings, or Prime Ministers. When one thinks of *Cain*, of *Manfred*, of *Don Juan*, of *Heaven and Earth*, of *The Deformed Transformed*, of *The Vision of Judgment*, it is easy to account for the contempt the youthful admirer of these strong pieces would feel for *We are Seven*, *Old Simon Lee*, *Goody Blake*, *Andrew Jones*, and other effusions of Rydal Mount.

Byron was a great cosmopolite. He thought fit to abuse his native land and the temper and policy of her rulers. He expressed sympathy with other

rages and shared alien aspirations. Foreigners have been quick to observe and eager to respond to this unusual note in our insular frame of mind. Outside these islands Byron stands alone and first. This is, perhaps, assisted by the circumstance that he is an easy poet to translate. His language, his passions, his subjects, his moods, savour of the universal world. We may well be proud of Byron's foreign popularity, and should never forget or overrate it.

The things that have stood in Byron's way at home are, *first*, his falsetto note. As there is usually much cant in anti-cant, so often there is much humbug in anti-humbug. It is not now easy to believe in Byron. His audacity has ceased to astonish, yet—there is the puzzle—Byron's *sincerity*, both as a poet and a politician and also as a letter-writer, is a true note of his essential greatness. He overdid it—that is all. His language is stronger than was justified by his very slender equipment as a thinker. This *false* destroys the hero though it leaves the man.

Another obstacle in Byron's way is thus stated by Mr. Swinburne: "One native and incurable defect grew up and strengthened, side by side with his noblest qualities, a feeble and faulty sense of metre. No poet of equal or inferior rank ever had so bad an ear. His smoother cadences are often vulgar and facile; his fresher notes are often incomplete and inharmonious. His verse stumbles and jingles, stammers and halts where there is most need for a swift and even pace of musical sound."

That is all—but it is a good deal. Byron's de-

fects are visible defects, want of metre and want of satisfying permanent thought.

However, there Byron is and there he will remain. Mankind will not long submit to be dictated to by caprice or lectured by coteries. Byron was furious with those of his contemporaries who said Pope was no poet, and we have among us to-day angry critics ready to bawl out hard names if we style Byron a poet. Let them bawl. Byron, no less than Pope, was a great writer, a tremendous force, a wide-ranging triumphant power. Mr. Brandes' praise, though it may occasionally be uncritical, is honest, and if it induces some of our bloodless youngsters to read over again, or it may be for the first time, the Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold*, *Cain*, *Manfred*, *Heaven and Earth*, and *The Vision of Judgment*, good may possibly come of it.

And now, as lecturers say in their dreary way, "We turn to Wordsworth." He also is there, and about him there is now no manner of doubt. His poetical output has been sifted through sieves, filtered through filters, and fanned with fans, after a fashion which must have given his proud spirit the keenest pangs known to wounded vanity. Wordsworth thought everything he wrote beyond praise. He never, like Johnson, grew sick of himself. No line of his ever struck him as otiose, much less as absurd. He never yawned over the *Excursion*, or found the *White Doe* long winded. The world has thought fit to differ with Mr. William Wordsworth and has damned a great volume of his verse beyond redemption. Yet this same world, scornful as it too easily

is, bored as it readily becomes, sworn foe of the tire-some and the wire-drawn, shrinking as it naturally does from the Egoist and the Self-Absorbed, always disregardful of the preaching-man and impatient of prophets and their tripods—this same world has taken the pure remnant of Wordsworth's poetry to its heart of hearts, and ranks its author high above Byron, though Mr. Brandes does not think so.

Even critics who are anti-Wordsworthian by the law of their being, men like Mr. Swinburne who can say that Wordsworth treated Nature "as a vegetable fit to shred into his pot and pare down like the outer leaves of a lettuce for didactic and culinary purposes," men like that powerful genius and supreme critic, D. G. Rossetti, who "grudged every vote given to Wordsworth," men like that detached intelligence, Edward FitzGerald, whose disrespectful title for our Bard was "Old Daddy Wordsworth," even these men have all alike felt themselves *invitâ Minerva*, constrained by the inward majesty, the quintessential greatness of this pragmatistical stamp-collector, to crown him amongst the greatest of our poets.

This Mr. Brandes has failed to perceive. He quotes with approval the forgotten remark of that somewhat arid personage, Lord John Russell, that if Wordsworth had written the Third Canto of *Childe Harold* it would have been his best work. Poor Lord John! it is hard to disinter such an observation. Only a foreigner could have done it. Again, Mr. Brandes writes of Wordsworth's "narrow mind" eclipsed by Byron.

The fact appears to be that our author has allowed his dislike of Wordsworth to get into the way of his poetry. Mr. Brandes can forgive Allegra and Miss Jane Clairmont, but cannot away with Wordsworth's smug Anglicanism. Critics must learn to conquer their personal dislikes.

*Note.*—It may be that now, after reading a recent biography of Wordsworth, Mr. Brandes is better disposed towards this poet

## A GALLERY OF AUTHORS.

(1891)

IT is no doubt very difficult to help sneering at poets and authors whilst they are alive. They expose themselves in such a variety of ways. But when they are dead, they make a good show. If you doubt it, pay a visit to the exhibition of pictures, strangely called of the "Royal House of Guelph," where the chief interest will be found to lie not in the Hanover stem or any of its branches, but in a large collection of portraits of those whom Thackeray was wont (disrespectfully) to describe as "littery gents."

In the south gallery alone there are upwards of fifty pictures of poets and playwrights and novelists. Your first glance round this room, when you step into it out of the street, affords a strange sensation. It is peopled with familiar faces, and in an instant becomes crowded with intimate delights. The world you do not know is the world you have just left in Regent's Street; the world you do know lies all about you. In a few moments your eye has picked out Pope, Sterne, Johnson, Goldsmith, Scott, Cowper, and Lamb. It would be rash to say you



know these men, but anyhow you know them better than you do your living friends, neighbours, and colleagues—for have you not read their books, their letters? The seven men just named muster one hundred and sixty-seven volumes between them. There is matter for many a May morning! We have something to go upon. We are not left at the mercy of the painter. We are not strangers in the family of Genius. We peruse the lineaments, we scrutinize the countenances of these authors as they have been depicted for us by their contemporary artists, with eager, devouring eyes, but with easy minds. We are not to be taken in. If the face as limned dissatisfies us, we can say to ourselves, “Had the artist read his sitter’s books and letters as we have, he would have put more of them into his picture.”

For the most part the portraits passed muster fairly well. Goldsmith’s ugly face seems to ask “Can you love me?” of all questions the easiest to answer when he asks it. No child would be tempted by Sterne’s strange smile to pluck his gown and ask to partake in what is obviously unholy merriment. I feel more certain of my company when alone with Sir Joshua’s Johnson, than I am ever able to be when in the society of living moralists; whilst to gaze into the luminous depths of Sir Walter’s eyes in Raeburn’s picture ought to be enough to turn an acrid quack into a human being. To move about among such pictures half realizes the young enthusiast’s conception of what a *salon* ought to be, but is not, never was, and never

can be. Each new face instead of freezing, feeds the flow of fancy, and dips afresh into the store-house of pleasant memories.

There is not much to be gained by gazing at the canvas labelled "Swift." The Dean is as heavy and uninteresting here as in his dusky lair in the Bodleian. Very different is Kneller's Pope. Any one who is sufficiently ill-disposed and ungrateful to quarrel with Pope ought to spend at least ten minutes in this south gallery. Prints of the picture are to be seen on all hands, but its expression of well-nigh intolerable bodily pain and exquisite sensibility is only rightly to be felt in the painting itself, which is in admirable condition. To abuse Pope before studying this picture, is to speak evil of a stranger; to do so afterwards would be to stab the wounded.

Each portrait is worth a king's ransom. Romney's Cowper with the nightcap proves not to be so mad in reality as the almost too familiar prints make it out to be. It cannot, however, compare with Kneller's Pope in the power of exciting compassion for infirmity.

These are all great names; but if you would enjoy to the uttermost such a collection of pictures as the one we are referring to, and taste all its humours, you must cast off the high-mightiness of the modern critic, who is for ever protesting that only the Best is good enough for him, and is happiest when he is swearing he never heard of Whitehead, either Paul or William, or read a line of Pye.

It is interesting to compare Campbell's *Specimens of the British Poets*, published in seven volumes in 1819, with the four volumes published in 1880, under the general superintendence of Mr. Humphry Ward. The increasingly severe taste of the public is made very plain by this examination. Campbell was himself a poet, and certainly need not fear comparison with the numerous critics who assisted Mr. Ward; but he was animated by the easy eighteenth-century morals, which thought no evil, and accordingly he made his selection from the poets in much the same spirit as Dr. Johnson before him had written their lives, without much minding their merit.

You will find many poets in Campbell for whom you will look in vain in Ward. Who was James Merrick, and who Cuthbert Shaw? Goldsmith is hitched in between Lord Chesterfield and Whitehead—Paul, not William. Burns's merits are certainly not concealed by Bamfylde's, who precedes, or obliterated by Mason's, who follows him.

It must not be supposed that the author of *Ye Mariners of England* and *The Battle of the Baltic* thought much of Merrick or believed in Bamfylde; but there the fellows were; they had been (possibly) read in their day, the copyright had expired, why should they be denied a narrow plot whereon to exercise for the last time their spavined muse? Of many of his crew of poets, Campbell writes half humorously, half apologetically. To read them all through would, he admits, be impossible, but a line here or there is not so bad. Mr.

Ward's *posse* of critics do not write in the least like this. Their four volumes might be the Kingdom of Heaven, so hard have they made it for a bad poet to enter therein.

Still, for the purpose of visiting the Guelph Exhibition, and for other purposes as commendable, it is a good thing to be a little interested in bad poets. They are always turning up one way or another ; and however bad their poetry may have been, their lives are often at least as interesting as those of their betters. The mightiest poet that ever lived could never, I am sure, have got more drunk than Cuthbert Shaw used to do, or died more miserably than George Sewell.

Besides which, historically the bad and the good are so mixed together that, as the sentimental chambermaid at the Hollytree Inn cried out, " It's a shame to part them." For example, in this Guelph Exhibition there are portraits of four Laureates—Colley Cibber, who succeeded Eusden ; Whitehead (William, not Paul), who succeeded Cibber ; Southey who succeeded Pye ; and Wordsworth, who succeeded Southey. There are also portraits of Gray and Rogers, who actually refused the Bays ; of Scott, who might have had them for the lifting of his hand ; and of Mason, who lifted both hands, but did not get what Gray refused and Whitehead accepted.

Here are grouped together names ascending high as heaven and descending *ad inferos*. Wordsworth and Gray, Cibber and Whitehead ! Cibber, perhaps, is the low-water mark of British poetry.

Campbell gives but one specimen of this Laureate's muse. It is called "The Blind Boy":

"O say! what is that thing call'd light  
Which I must ne'er enjoy?  
What are the blessings of the sight?  
Oh, tell your poor blind boy."

The remaining four stanzas are of equal demerit; and the whole poem supports the paradox I have heard maintained by a whimsical fellow, that the prose of poets is always better than their poetry; for what can be more entertaining than Cibber's *Apology*—the only book about actors and actresses of which one never tires? Certainly, were I to be shut up for a wet afternoon "at some lone ale-house on the Berkshire moors," and saw but a single book in the parlour, I should be happier if on examination it proved to be the *Apology* of the earlier Laureate, and not the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* or even the *White Doe* of the later one.

Of William Whitehead there is an excellent portrait in this south gallery. The amiable Campbell gives twelve pages to this poet's life. He was the son of a baker; but Campbell truthfully, though unkindly, says that the annals of baking can boast of much more illustrious individuals having sprung from the loins of its professors. Whitehead was a Fellow of Clare, Cambridge, and a nobleman's tutor. His death was sudden, says Campbell, and his peaceable life was closed without a groan. It is his readers who groan, as they close his tragedies. Whitehead had never much reputation, and the

little he had he so entirely outlived, that he published his later works anonymously to escape the ridicule of the critics. However, here is his picture in the exhibition, hanging hard by Hogarth's. It would be a pity not to be interested in Whitehead. You won't find anything about him in Mr. Ward's volumes.

Southey's portrait by Phillips is a fine likeness of one of the handsomest and most honourable of men ; though I fear it will go hard with him in the anthologies of the next century. He must be content to be cut down ; but wholly destroyed he can never be. It is an interesting portrait, though hardly so vivid a picture as is composed by the single sentence of that mighty limner of men's faces, Carlyle : " Southey's complexion is still healthy mahogany-brown, with a fleece of white hair, and eyes that seem running at full gallop."

Hoppner's Rogers is a good picture, but here again Carlyle drives the painters headlong before him, and usurps their functions. " Old Rogers, with his pale head, white, bare, and cold as snow, will work on you with those large blue eyes, cruel, sorrowful, and that sardonic shelf-chin." And yet I read somewhere the other day that Emerson's letters were better than Carlyle's. You may keep the Whiteheads out of the anthologies, but you cannot keep the Blockheads out of the newspapers.

Before leaving the gallery, glance at Campbell's portrait. It is bland, but hardly so benevolent as you might have expected it to be from reading his *Specimens*.

## A SALE CATALOGUE OF 1890.

(JUNE, 1890)

WE live in an age of Dispersions. Good things lie all around us, as Heaven was once declared to do in our infancy by an optimist. If we have money in our pockets, there is hardly anything, save the respect of our fellow-men, we cannot purchase. It was not always so. Take old books as an example. Caxtons and Wynkyn de Wordes used to come but seldom into the market. With what inflated terms does the Rev. T. F. Dibdin discourse on these subjects. Dukes and Earls were their proper custodians. Clerical librarians alone handled them. When at the Duke of Roxburghe's sale Lord Spencer bought two Caxtons for £245, Dibdin records how "his lordship put each volume under his coat and walked home with them in all the flush of victory and consciousness of triumph." To-day you may buy Caxtons and Wynkyn de Wordes in Bloomsbury, though not at these prices, and take them home with you on the top of an omnibus.

It is the same with pictures, porcelain, armour, wood-carving, and everything else; libraries, galleries, palaces, castles, are daily giving up their long-



cherished, or at all events preserved, treasures, which now go on their way east, west, south, and north,

“ Making new hearts beat and bosoms swell.”

This is perhaps pleasant for the rich man who can capture a treasure or two and make it his own, but it is not equally so for the poor man whose only chance is looking. For the latter

“ Thus hungry, longing thus, without a penny,”

the larger and more famous the collection, the better is his chance of being allowed to see it. There is a point when it becomes selfish to keep the public out.

There is only one advantage reaped by the poor man from these frequent and increasing dispersions. He gets the catalogues. There is no better reading to be had anywhere. The leisured pauper can no doubt attend the actual sale, but sales are apt to be as dreary as debates in Parliament. Every now and then there is a fierce moment, but for the most part it is heavy work. Book sales in particular are melancholy, squalid things. Booksellers are very good fellows in their own shops, but they do not appear to advantage at sales. They are said to resent the intrusion of outsiders. To see them handling the homeless volumes, poor evicted things, and shoving them down the table to a rival buyer, is a sorry sight ; and if by any hard chance the books thus roughly held and coarsely violated were once in their totality the library of a friend, and the silent witnesses from their cosy corners of his hospitable greetings, it is well-nigh unbearable.

James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, wrote no more strangely effective poem than one called *In a Room*, which describes a man lying dead upon his bed, and as the hours go by and no one comes to open the shutters and let in the daylight, the furniture, which is poor and old, begins to talk and wonder what has happened, till at last the bed breaks silence and pronounces its occupant *dead*.

“ At this last word of solemn lore  
A tremor circled through the gloom,  
As if a crash upon the floor  
Had jarred and shaken all the room ;  
For nearly all the listening things  
Were old and worn, and knew what curse  
Of violent change death often brings  
From good to bad—from bad to worse ;  
They get to know each other well,  
To feel at home and settled down :  
Death bursts among them like a shell  
And strews them over all the town.”

There is, I repeat, something melancholy in these dispersions ; but it belongs to the nature of things, and in the meantime one has the catalogues.

Scorn not the catalogue ; it is sometimes literature. Last month a collection of autograph letters of eminent men was sold in London, and the contents were for the most part set out *in extenso* in the catalogue, which thus became a supplement to many biographies already on the shelf, and a foretaste of others not yet written.

The publication, even in a catalogue, of the letters of living or but recently dead men is to be depre-

cated, and without the consent of the writer or his executor is (possibly) illegal ; but there can be no harm in printing a letter of Jeremy Taylor's written in 1661, and addressed to the Primate of Ireland, even though it reveals the author of *Holy Living* "busy in executing the Lords Justices' warrant for disarming the disaffected Irish," and trying to raise £100 for the Archbishop.

It is amusing to find Addison writing to Mr. Hughes and thanking him most extravagantly for a copy of verses written in commendation of *Cato*, but saying he must deprive his play, when published, of the noble ornament. "To tell you truly, I have received other poems upon the same occasion, and one or two from persons of quality who will never pardon me if I do not give them a place at the same time that I give any other."

Notwithstanding this, if one turns to one's *Cato*, Mr. Hughes's "noble ornament" will be found figuring at the beginning in company with other verses written by Steele, Young, Eusden, Tickell, Cotes, and Ambrose Philips. The verses by the persons of quality, if they ever existed, are left out. They must have been bad indeed if they were worse than Eusden's, which conclude thus :

" But I in vain on single features dwell,  
While all the parts of the fair piece excel ;  
So rich the store, so dubious is the feast,  
We know not which to pass or which to taste.  
The shining incidents so justly fall,  
We may the whole new scenes of transport call.  
Thus jewellers confound our wand'ring eyes,  
And with variety of gems surprise :

Here Sapphires, here the Sardian stone is seen,  
The Topaz yellow and the Jasper green,  
The costly Brilliant there, confus'dly bright,  
From numerous surfaces darts trembling light,  
The different colours mingling in a blaze.  
Silent we stand, unable where to praise,  
In pleasure sweetly lost ten thousand ways."

Eusden was Poet Laureate, so nobody need despair. He was also a Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, and took orders, and eventually to drink. But he was in his glorious prime when he wrote the above lines.

Turning a page of the catalogue, and from literature to life, Richard Baxter is found writing to Dr. Good, the Master of Balliol, protesting against a passage contained in a book written by the Doctor which made the assertion that all the Nonconformists had their hands stained with the blood of King Charles. Baxter says, "It may be that you know that an Assembly of Divines (twice met) at Coventre (of whom two Drs. and some others are yet living) first sent me into y<sup>e</sup> Army to hazard my life (after Naseby fight) agt y<sup>e</sup> course which we then first perceived to be designed agt the King and Kingdome, nor what I went through there two yeares, we opposing it and drawing the soldiers off; nor how oft I preached agt Cromwell, the Rump, y<sup>e</sup> Engagement, but specially their wars and fasts and thanksgivings; nor what I said to Cromwell for the King (never but twice speaking with him), of which a great Privy Councillour told me but lately, that being an ear witness of it, he had told his Majesty."

From Baxter to Burns is no great jump alpha-

betically, but it is odd to find exposed for sale in 1890 the familiar letter written by the poet to Dr. Moore, enclosing the terrible *Ode Sacred to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald*. The letter has been in print, as a note to the ode, for generations, and painfully reveals how invective poetry comes to be written. It wasn't Mrs. Oswald's fault that her funeral procession should have driven Burns and his friend Bailie Whigham one bitter January night from their comfortable quarters and smoking bowl in the inn at Sanquhar, twelve miles over the wildest moors and hills in Ayrshire to the inn at New Cumnock. The lady may possibly have been a miserly hunk; but had she lingered on, as the poor soul would doubtless have gladly done, till July, she never would have been cursed in that terrible way by an Immortal. Perhaps, on the whole, it is a mercy great poets are so scarce. You may jostle most of the brood, and drive them over moor and glen, crag and torrent, with impunity. They will curse you, but no one will read their curses.

We soon stumble upon another well-known letter—one of the saddest ever written. It was written in 1795 by Lady Hesketh describing the awful plight of Cowper and Mrs. Unwin. A part of the letter is printed in the catalogue, but more, if not the whole, is to be found in Southey's *Life of the poet*. By 1795 the two, for ever associated together in memory and verse, had begun to torture one another. "He lives in a constant state of terror that is dreadful to behold. He is now come to expect daily and even *hourly* that he shall be

carried off. . . . Can I find room to tell you Mrs. Unwin had another attack the seventeenth of last month? It affected her face and voice only. She is a dreadful spectacle; yet within these two days she has made our wretched cousin drag her round the garden." The picture is intolerable. Lady Hesketh naturally perhaps speaks a little unkindly of Mrs. Unwin, but we ought not to forget, what the stricken poet never did, that it was in his service her health and nerves were shattered.

" And should my future lot be cast  
With much resemblance of the past,  
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,  
My Mary."

Writing in 1786 to Lady Hesketh herself, Cowper had said, referring to his illness in 1773, " I believed that everybody hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me most of all. . . . At the same time that I was convinced of Mrs. Unwin's aversion to me, I could endure no other companion. The whole management of me consequently devolved upon her, and a terrible task she had. She performed it, however, with a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled on such an occasion; and I have often heard her say that if ever she praised God in her life it was when she found she was to have all the labour. She performed it accordingly; but, as I hinted once before, very much to the hurt of her constitution." In 1787 Cowper went mad again, and made a most desperate attempt upon his life. Again Mary Unwin stood alone by the maniac's side. Lady Hesketh

was kind to Cowper at the very end of his life, but it is ill to speak harshly of—

“The patient flower  
Who possessed his darker hour.”

Letters of Hood, Lamb, Dr. Johnson, Thackeray, teeming with character, and all helping to build up our estimate of their delightful characters, lure one on ; but it is perhaps better to stop here—a catalogue of other men's wit should not be turned into a record of one's own folly.



## TAR AND WHITEWASH.

(189-)

I AM, I confess it, hard to please. If a round dozen of Bad Women, all made in England too, does not satisfy me, what will? What ails the fellow at them? Yet was I at first dissatisfied, and am, therefore, glad to notice that whilst I was demurring and splitting hairs the great, generous public was buying the *Lives of Twelve Bad Women*, by Arthur Vincent, and putting it into a second edition. This is as it should be. When the excellent Dean Burgon dubbed his dozen biographies *Twelve Good Men*, it probably never occurred to him that the title suggested three companion volumes; but so it did, and two of them, *Twelve Bad Men* and *Twelve Bad Women*, have made their appearance. I still await, with great patience, *Twelve Good Women*. Twelve was the number of the Apostles. Had it not been, one might be tempted to ask, Why twelve? But as there must be some limit to bookmaking, there is no need to quarrel with any limit, even though it be but an arithmetical one.

My criticism upon the Dean's dozen was that they were not by any means, all of them, conspicuously good men; for, to name one only, who would call

old Dr. Routh, the President of Magdalen, a particularly good man? In a sense, all Presidents, Provosts, Principals, and Masters of Colleges are good men—in fact, they must be so by the statutes—but to few of them are given the special notes of goodness. Dr. Routh was a remarkable man, a learned man, perhaps a pious man—undeniably, when he came to die, an old man—but he was no better than his colleagues. This weakness of classification has run all through the series, and is my real quarrel with it. I do not understand the principle of selection. I did not understand the Dean's test of goodness, nor do I understand Mr. Seccombe's or Mr. Vincent's test of badness. What do we mean by a good man or a bad one, a good woman or a bad one? Most people, like the young man in the song, are "not very good, nor yet very bad." We move about the pastures of life in huge herds, and all do the same things, at the same times, and for the same reasons. "Forty feeding like one." Are we mean? Well, we have done some mean things in our time. Are we generous? Occasionally we are. Were we good sons or dutiful daughters? We have both honoured and dishonoured our parents, who, in their turn, had done the same by theirs. Do we melt at the sight of misery? Indeed we do. Do we forget all about it when we have turned the corner? Frequently that is so. Do we expect to be put to open shame at the Great Day of Judgment? We should be terribly frightened of this did we not cling to the hope that amidst the shocking revelations then for

the first time made public our little affairs may fail to attract much notice. Judged by the standards of humanity, few people are either good or bad. "I have not been a great sinner," said the dying Nelson ; nor had he—he had only been made a great fool of by a woman. Mankind is all tarred with the same brush, though some who chance to be operated upon when the brush is fresh from the barrel get more than their share of the tar. The biography of a celebrated man usually reminds me of the outside of a coastguardman's cottage—all tar and white-wash. These are the two condiments of human life—tar and whitewash—the faults and the excuses for the faults, the passions and pettinesses that make us occasionally drop on all fours, and the generous aspirations that at times enable us, if not to stand upright, at least to adopt the attitude of the kangaroo. It is rather tiresome, this perpetual game of French and English going on inside one. True goodness and real badness escape it altogether. A good man does not spend his life wrestling with the Powers of Darkness. He is victor in the fray, and the most he is called upon to do every now and again is to hit his prostrate foe a blow over the costard just to keep him in his place. Thus rid of a perpetual anxiety, the good man has time to grow in goodness, to expand pleasantly, to take his ease on Zion. You can see in his face that he is at peace with himself—that he is no longer at war with his elements. His society, if you are fond of goodness, is both agreeable and medicinal ; but if you are a bad man it is hateful, and you cry out with Mr.

Love-lust in Bunyan's *Vanity Fair*: "Away with him. I cannot endure him; he is for ever condemning my way."

Not many of Dean Burgon's biographies reached this standard. The explanation, perhaps, is that the Dean chiefly moved in clerical circles where excellence is more frequently to be met with than goodness.

In the same way a really bad man is one who has frankly said, "Evil, be thou my good." Like the good man, though for a very different reason, the bad one has ceased to make war with the devil. Finding a conspiracy against goodness going on, the bad man joins it, and thus, like the good man, is at peace with himself. The bad man is bent upon his own way, to get what he wants, no matter at what cost. Human lives! What do they matter? A woman's honour! What does that matter? Truth and fidelity! What are they? To know what you want, and not to mind what you pay for it, is the straight path to fame, fortune, and hell-fire. Careers, of course, vary; to dominate a continent or to open a corner shop as a pork-butcher's, plenty of devilry may go to either ambition. Also, genius is a rare gift. It by no means follows that because you are a bad man you will become a great one; but to be bad, and at the same time unsuccessful, is a hard fate. It casts a little doubt upon a man's badness if he does not, at least, make a little money. It is a poor business accompanying badness on to a common scaffold, or to see it die in a wretched garret. That was one of my complaints with Mr.

Seccombe's Twelve Bad Men. Most of them came to violent ends. They were all failures.

But I have kept these twelve ladies waiting a most unconscionable time. Who are they? There are amongst them four courtesans: Alice Perrers, one of King Edward III.'s misses; Barbara Villiers, one of King Charles II.'s; Mrs. Mary Anne Clarke, who had to be content with a royal Duke; and Mrs. Con Phillips. Six members of the criminal class: Alice Arden, Moll Cutpurse, Jenny Diver, Elizabeth Brownrigg, Elizabeth Canning, and Mary Bateman; and only two ladies of title, Frances Howard, Countess of Somerset, and Elizabeth Chudleigh, Duchess of Kingston. Of these twelve bad women one-third were executed, Alice Arden being burnt at Canterbury, Jenny Diver and Elizabeth Brownrigg being hung at Tyburn, and Mary Bateman suffering the same fate at Leeds. Elizabeth Canning was sentenced to seven years' transportation, and, indeed, if their biographers are to be believed, all the other ladies made miserable ends. There is nothing triumphant about their badness. Even from the point of view of this world they had better have been good. In fact, squalor is the badge of the whole tribe. Some of them, probably—Elizabeth Brownrigg, for example—were mad. This last-named poor creature bore sixteen children to a house-painter and plasterer, and then became a parish midwife, and only finally a baby-farmer. Her cruelty to her apprentices had madness in every detail. To include her in this volume was wholly unnecessary. She lives but in

George Canning's famous parody on Southey's sonnet to the regicide Marten.

With those sentimentalists who maintain that all bad people are mad I will have no dealings. It is sheer nonsense ; lives of great men all remind us it is sheer nonsense. Some of our greatest men have been infernal scoundrels—pre-eminently bad men—with nothing mad about them, unless it be mad to get on in the world and knock people about in it.

*Twelve Bad Women* contains much interesting matter, but, on the whole, it is depressing. It seems very dull to be bad. Perhaps the editor desired to create this impression ; if so, he has succeeded. Hannah More had fifty times more fun in her life than all these courtesans and criminals put together. The note of jollity is entirely absent. It was no primrose path these unhappy women traversed, though that it led to the everlasting bonfire it were unchristian to doubt. The dissatisfaction I confessed to at the beginning returns upon me as a cloud at the end ; but, for all that, I rejoice the book is in a second edition, and I hope soon to hear it is in a third, for it has a moral tendency.

## OUR GREAT MIDDLE CLASS.

(1897)

THE republication of Mr. Arnold's *Friendship's Garland* after an interval of twenty-seven years may well set us all a-thinking. Here it is, in startling facsimile—the white covers, destined too soon to become black, the gilt device, the familiar motto. As we gazed upon it, we found ourselves exclaiming, so vividly did it recall the past :

“ It is we, it is we, who have changed.”

*Friendship's Garland* was a very good joke seven-and-twenty years ago, and though some of its once luminous paint has been rubbed off, and a few of its jests have ceased to effervesce, it is a good joke still. Mr. Bottle's mind, *qua* mind ; the rowdy Philistine Adolescents Leo, Esq. ; Dr. Russell, of the *Times*, mounting his war-horse ; the tale of how Lord Lumpington and the Rev. Esau Hittall got their degrees at Oxford ; and many another ironic thrust which made the reader laugh “ while the hair was yet brown on his head,” may well make him laugh still, “ though his scalp is almost hairless, and his figure's grown convex.” Since 1871 we have learnt the



answer to the sombre lesson, "What is it to grow old?" But, thank God! we can laugh even yet.

The humour and high spirits of *Friendship's Garland* were, however, but the gilding of a pill, the artificial sweetening of a nauseous draught. In reality, and joking apart, the book is an indictment at the bar of *Geist* of the English people as represented by its middle class and by its full-voiced organ, the daily press. Mr. Arnold invented Arminius to be the mouthpiece of this indictment, the traducer of our "imperial race," because such blasphemies could not artistically have been attributed to one of the number. He made Arminius a Prussian because in those far-off days Prussia stood for Von Humboldt and education and culture, and all the things Sir Thomas Bazley and Mr. Miall were supposed to be without. Around the central figure of Arminius the essentially playful fancy of Mr. Arnold grouped other figures, including his own. What an old equity draftsman would call "the charging parts" of the book consist in the allegations that the Government of England had been taken out of the hands of an aristocracy grown barren of ideas and stupid beyond words, and entrusted to a middle class without noble traditions, wretchedly educated, full of *Ungeist*, with a passion for clap-trap, only wanting to be left alone to push trade and make money; so ignorant as to believe that feudalism can be abated without any heroic Stein, by providing that in one insignificant case out of a hundred thousand, land shall not follow the feudal law of descent; without a single vital idea or sentiment or

feeling for beauty or appropriateness ; well persuaded that if more trade is done in England than anywhere else, if personal independence is without a check, and newspaper publicity unbounded, that is, by the nature of things, to be great ; misled every morning by the magnificent *Times* or the " rowdy " *Telegraph* ; desperately prone to preaching to other nations, proud of being able to say what it likes, whilst wholly indifferent to the fact that it has nothing whatever to say.

Such, in brief, is the substance of this most agreeable volume. Its message was lightly treated by the grave and reverend seigniors of the State. The magnificent *Times*, the rowdy *Telegraph*, continued to preach their gospels as before ; but for all that Mr. Arnold found an audience fit, though few, and, of course, he found it among the people he abused. The barbarians, as he called the aristocracy, were not likely to pay heed to a professor of poetry. Our working classes were not readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette* or purchasers of four-and-sixpenny tracts bound in white cloth. No ; it was the middle class, to whom Mr. Arnold himself belonged, who took him to honest hearts, stuck his photograph upon their writing-tables, and sounded his praises so loudly that his fame even reached the United States of America, where he was promptly invited to lecture, an invitation he accepted. But for the middle classes Mr. Arnold would have had but a poor time of it. They did not mind being insulted ; they overlooked exaggeration ; they pardoned ignorance—in a word, they proved teachable. Yet,

though meek in spirit, they have not yet inherited the earth ; indeed, there are those who assert that their chances are gone, their sceptre for ever buried. It is all over with the middle class. Tuck up its muddled head ! Tie up its chin !

A rabble of bad writers may now be noticed pushing their vulgar way along, who, though born and bred in the middle classes, and disfigured by many of the very faults Mr. Arnold deplored, yet make it a test of their membership, an " open sesame " to their dull orgies, that all decent, sober-minded folk, who love virtue, and, on the whole, prefer delicate humour to sickly lubricity, should be labelled " middle class."

Politically, it cannot but be noticed that, for good or for ill, the old middle-class audience no longer exists in its integrity. The crowds that flocked to hear Cobden and Bright, that abhorred slavery, that cheered Kossuth, that hated the income-tax, are now watered down by a huge population who do not know, and do not want to know, what the income-tax is, but who do want to know what the Government is going to do for them in the matter of shorter hours, better wages, and constant employment. Will the rabble, we wonder, prove as teachable as the middle class ? Will they consent to be told their faults as meekly ? Will they buy the photograph of their physician, or heave half a brick at him ? It remains to be seen. In the meantime it would be a mistake to assume that the middle class counts for nothing, even at an election. As to ideas, have we got any new ones since 1871 ?

“To be consequent and powerful,” says Arminius “men must be bottomed on some vital idea or sentiment which lends strength and certainty to their action.” There are those who tell us that we have at last found this vital idea in new conceptions of the British Empire associated with the name of Mr. Chamberlain. Would that Arminius could be recalled to tell us what he thinks of our new Ariel girdling the earth with twenty Prime Ministers, each the choicest product of a self-governing and deeply-involved colony. Is it a vital or a vulgar idea? Is it merely a big theory or really a great one? Is it the ornate beginning of a Time, or but the tawdry ending of a period? At all events, it is an idea unknown to Arminius von Thunder-Ten-Tronckh, and we ought to be, and are, thankful for it.

## NATIONALITY.

(1890)

NOTHING can well be more offensive than the abrupt asking of questions, unless indeed it be the glib assurance which professes to be able to answer them without a moment's doubt or consideration. It is hard to forgive Sir Robert Peel for having once asked, "What is a pound?" Cobden's celebrated question, "What next? And next?" was perhaps less objectionable, being vast and vague, and, to employ Sir Thomas Browne's well-known phrase, capable of a wide solution.

But in these disagreeable days we must be content to be disagreeable. We must even accept being so as our province. It seems now recognized that he is the best Parliamentary debater who is most disagreeable. It is not so easy as some people imagine to be disagreeable. The gift requires cultivation. It is easier, no doubt, for some than for others.

What is a nation—socially and politically, and as a unit to be dealt with by practical politicians? It is not a great many things. It is not blood, it is not birth, it is not breeding. A man may have been born at Surat and educated at Lausanne, one of his four great-grandfathers may have been a Dutchman,

one of his four great-grandmothers a French refugee, and yet he himself may remain, from his cradle in Surat to his grave at Singapore, a true-born Englishman, with all an Englishman's fine contempt for mixed races and struggling nationalities.

Where the English came from is still a matter of controversy, but where they have gone to is writ large over the earth's surface. Yet their nationality has suffered no eclipse. Caviare is not so good in London as in Moscow, but it is caviare all the same. No foreigner needs to ask the nationality of the man who treads on his corns, smiles at his religion, and does not want to know anything about his aspirations.

England has all the notes of a nation. She has a National Church, based upon a view of history peculiarly her own. She has a National Oath, which, without any undue pride, may be pronounced adequate for ordinary occasions. She has a Constitution, the admiration of the world, and of which a fresh account has to be written every twenty years. She has a History, glorious in individual feats, and splendid in accomplished facts; she has a Literature which makes the poorest of her children, if only he has been taught to read, rich beyond the dreams of avarice. As for the national character, it may be said of an Englishman, what has been truly said of the great English poet Wordsworth—take him at his best and he need own no superior. He cannot always be at his best; and when he is at his worst the world shudders.

But what about Scotland and Ireland? Are

they nations? If they are not, it is not because their separate characteristics have been absorbed by John Bullism. Scotland and Ireland are no more England than Holland or Belgium. It may be doubted whether, if the three countries had never been politically united, their existing unlikeness would have been any greater than it is. It is a most accentuated unlikeness. Scotland has her own prevailing religion. Mr. Arnold recognized this when he observed, in that manner of his which did not always give pleasure, that Dr. Chalmers reminded him of a Scotch thistle valorously trying to look as much like the rose of Sharon as possible. This distorted view of Mr. Arnold's at all events recognizes a fact. Then there is Scotch law. If there is one legal proposition which John Bull—poor attorney-ridden John Bull—has grasped for himself, it is that a promise made without a monetary or otherwise valuable consideration, is in its legal aspect a thing of nought, which may be safely disregarded. Bull's views about the necessity of writing and sixpenny stamps are vague, but he is quite sound and certain about promises going for nothing unless something passed between the parties. Thus, if an Englishman, moved, let us say, by the death of his father, says hastily to a maiden aunt who has made the last days of his progenitor easy, "I will give you fifty pounds a year," and then repents him of his promise, he is under no legal obligation to make it good. If he is a gentleman he will send her a ten-pound note at Christmas and a fat goose at Michaelmas, and the matter drops as being but the babble of the sick-



room. But in Scotland the maiden aunt, provided she can prove her promise, can secure her annuity and live merrily in Peebles for the rest of a voluptuous life. Here is a difference indeed !

Then, Scotland has a history of her own. The late Dr. Hill Burton wrote it in nine comfortable volumes. She has a thousand traditions, foreign connections, feelings to which the English breast must always remain an absolute stranger. Scottish fields are different from English fields ; her farms, roads, walls, buildings, flowers, are different ; her schools, universities, churches, household ways, songs, foods, drinks, are all as different as may be. Boswell's Johnson, Lockhart's Scott ! What a host of dissimilarities, what an Iliad of unlikenesses, do the two names of Johnson and Scott call up from the vasty deep of national differences !

One great note of a nation is possessed to the full by Scotland. I mean the power of blending into one state of national feeling all those who call what is contained within her geographical boundaries by the sacred name of "Home." The Lowlander from Dumfries is more at home at Inverness than in York. Why is this ? Because Scotland is a nation. The great Smollett, who challenges Dickens for the foremost place amongst British comic writers, had no Celtic blood in his veins. He was neither a Papist nor a Jacobite, yet how did his Scottish blood boil whilst listening in London to the cowardly exultations of the cockneys over the brutalities that followed the English victory at Culloden ! and how bitterly—almost savagely—did he contrast that

cowardly exultation with the depression and alarm that had prevailed in London when but a little while before the Scotch had reached Derby.

What patriotic feeling breathes through Smollett's noble lines, *The Tears of Caledonia*, and with what delightful enthusiasm, with what affectionate admiration, does Sir Walter Scott tell us how the last stanza came to be written! "He (Smollett) accordingly read them the first sketch of the *Tears of Scotland*, consisting only of six stanzas, and on their remarking that the termination of the poem, being too strongly expressed, might give offence to persons whose political opinions were different, he sat down without reply, and with an air of great indignation, subjoined the concluding stanza :

“ ‘ While the warm blood bedews my veins,  
And unimpaired remembrance reigns,  
Resentment of my country's fate  
Within my filial breast shall beat.  
Yes, spite of thine insulting foe,  
My sympathizing verse shall flow.  
Mourn, hopeless Caledonia, mourn,  
Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn.’ ”

In the same sense is the story told by Mr. R. L. Stevenson, how, when the famous Celtic regiment, the Black Watch, which then drew its recruits from the now unpeopled glens of Ross-shire and Sutherland, returned to Scotland after years of foreign service, veterans leaped out of the boats and kissed the shore of Galloway.

The notes of Irish nationality have been, by conquest and ill-usage, driven deeper in. Her laws

were taken from her, and her religion brutally proscribed. In the great matter of national education she has not been allowed her natural and proper development. Her children have been driven abroad to foreign seminaries to get the religious education Protestant England denied them at home. Her nationality has thus been checked and mutilated, but that it exists in spirit and in fact can hardly be questioned by any impartial traveller. Englishmen have many gifts, but one gift they have not—that of making Scotsmen and Irishmen forget their native land.

The attitude of some Englishmen towards Scotch and Irish national feelings requires correction. The Scotsman's feelings are laughed at; the Irishman's insulted. So far as the laughter is concerned, it must be admitted that it is good-humoured. Burns, Scott, and Carlyle, Scotch moors and Scotch whisky, the royal game of golf, all have mollified and beatified English feelings. In candour, too, it must be admitted that Scotsmen are not conciliatory. They do not meet people half-way. I do not think the laughter does much harm. Insults are different. . . .

Mr. Arnold, in a now scarce pamphlet published in 1859, on the Italian Question, with the motto prefixed, "*Sed nondum est finis*," makes the following interesting observations :

" Let an Englishman or a Frenchman, who respectively represent the two greatest nationalities of modern Europe, sincerely ask himself what it is that makes him take pride in his nationality, what it

is which would make it intolerable to his feelings to pass, or to see any part of his country pass, under foreign dominion. He will find that it is the sense of self-esteem generated by knowing the figure which his nation makes in history; by considering the achievements of his nation in war, government, arts, literature, or industry. It is the sense that his people, which has done such great things, merits to exist in freedom and dignity, and to enjoy the luxury of self-respect."

This is admirable, but not, nor does it pretend to be, exhaustive. The love of country is something a little more than mere *amour-propre*. You may love your mother, and wish to make a home for her, even though she never dwelt in kings' palaces, and is clad in rags. The children of misery and misfortune are not all illegitimate. Sometimes you may discern amongst them high hope and pious endeavour. There may be, indeed, there is, a Niobe amongst the nations, but tears are not always of despair.

"The luxury of self-respect." It is a wise phrase. To make Ireland and Irishmen self-respectful is the task of statesmen.

## THE OFFICE OF LITERATURE.

(1886)

DR. JOHN BROWN'S pleasant story has become well known of the countryman who, being asked to account for the gravity of his dog, replied, "Oh, sir! life is full of sairiousness to him—he can just never get enOUGH o' fechtin.'" Something of the spirit of this saddened dog has lately entered into the very people who ought to be freest from it—our men of letters. They are not only quarrelsome, which I admit is an old complaint, but they are also very, very serious. To some of them it is almost dangerous to allude—save reverentially. Others are wedded to a theory or period, and are the most uxorious of husbands, not only ready to resent an affront to their ladies, but jealous of the most distant reference to their charms unless directly associated with their husbands' names. This devotion to the cause makes authors grave, though possibly very happy, after a pedantic fancy. Hazlitt, who was neither happy nor pedantic, has said well about pedantry: "The power of attaching an interest to the most trifling or painful pursuits is one of the greatest happinesses of our nature. The common soldier mounts the breach with joy, the

miser deliberately starves himself to death, the mathematician sets about extracting the cube root with a feeling of enthusiasm, and the lawyer sheds tears of delight over *Coke upon Lyttleton*. He who is not in some measure a pedant, though he may be a wise, cannot be a very happy man."

Possibly not ; but then we are surely not content that our authors should be pedants in order that they may be happy and devoted. As one of the great class for whose sole use and behalf literature exists—the class of readers—I protest that it is to me a matter of indifference whether an author is happy or not. I want him to make me happy. That is his office. Let him discharge it.

We should never confuse functions or apply wrong tests. What can books do for us? Dr. Johnson, the least pedantic of men, put the whole matter into a nutshell when he wrote that a book should teach us either to enjoy life or endure it. "Give us enjoyment!" "Teach us endurance!" Hearken to the ceaseless demand and the perpetual prayer of an ever unsatisfied and always suffering humanity!

How is a book to answer the ceaseless demand?

Self-forgetfulness is of the essence of enjoyment, and the author who would confer pleasure must possess the art, or know the trick, of destroying for the time the reader's own personality. Undoubtedly the easiest way of doing this is by the creation of a host of rival personalities—hence the number and the popularity of novels. Whenever a novelist fails his book is said to flag ; that is, the reader suddenly (as in skating) comes bump down upon his own per-

sonality, and curses the unskilful author. Plenty of characters, and continual motion is the easiest recipe for a novel, which, like a beggar, should always be kept "moving on." Nobody knew this better than Fielding, whose novels, like most good ones, are full of inns.

When those who are addicted to what is called "improving reading" inquire of you petulantly why you cannot find change of company and scene in books of travel, you should answer cautiously that when books of travel are full of inns, atmosphere, and motion, they are as good as any novel; nor is there any reason in the nature of things why they should not be so, though experience too often proves the contrary.

The truth or falsehood of a book is immaterial. George Borrow's *Bible in Spain* is, I suppose, true; though now that I come to think of it, in what is to me a new light, one remembers that it contains some odd things. But was not Borrow the accredited agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society? Did he not travel (and he had a free hand) at their charges? Was he not befriended by our Minister at Madrid, Mr. Villiers, subsequently Earl of Clarendon in the peerage of England? It must be true; and yet at this moment I would as lief' read a chapter of the *Bible in Spain* as I would *Gil Blas*: nay, I positively would give the preference to Don Jorge.

Nobody can sit down to read Borrow's book without as completely forgetting himself as if he were a boy in the forest with Gurth and Wamba



Borrow is provoking, and has his full share of faults, and, though the owner of a style, is capable of excruciating offences. His habitual use of the odious word "individual" as a noun-substantive (seven times in three pages of *The Romany Rye*) elicits the frequent groan, and he is certainly once guilty of calling fish the "finny tribe." He believed himself to be animated by an intense hatred of the Church of Rome, and disfigures many of his pages by tirades against that institution; but no Catholic of sense need on this account deny himself the pleasure of reading Borrow, whose one dominating passion was *camaraderie*, and who hob-nobbed in the friendliest spirit with priest and gipsy in a fashion as far beyond praise as it is beyond description by any pen other than his own. Hail to thee, George Borrow! Cervantes himself, Gil Blas, do not more effectually carry their readers into the land of the Cid than does this miraculous agent of the Bible Society, by favour of whose pleasantness we can, any hour of the week, enter Villafranca by night, or ride into Galicia on an Andalusian stallion (which proved to be a foolish thing to do), without costing anybody a *peseta*, and at no risk whatever to our necks—be they long or short.

Cooks, warriors, and authors must be judged by the effects they produce: toothsome dishes, glorious victories, pleasant books—these are our demands. We have nothing to do with ingredients, tactics, or methods. We have no desire to be admitted into the kitchen, the council, or the study. The cook may clean her saucepans how she pleases—the war-

rior place his men as he likes—the author handle his material or weave his plot as best he can—when the dish is served we only ask, Is it good ? when the battle has been fought, Who won ? when the book comes out, Does it read ?

Authors ought not to be above being reminded that it is their first duty to write agreeably—some very disagreeable men have succeeded in doing so, and there is therefore no need for any one to despair. Every author, be he grave or gay, should try to make his book as ingratiating as possible. Reading is not a duty, and has consequently no business to be made disagreeable. Nobody is under any obligation to read any other man's book.

Literature exists to please—to lighten the burden of men's lives ; to make them for a short while forget their sorrows and their sins, their silenced hearths, their disappointed hopes, their grim futures—and those men of letters are the best loved who have best performed literature's truest office. Their name is happily legion, and I will conclude these disjointed remarks by quoting from one of them, as honest a parson as ever took tithe or voted for the Tory candidate, the Rev. George Crabbe. Hear him in *The Frank Courtship* :

“ ‘ I must be loved,’ said Sybil ; ‘ I must see  
The men in terrors, who aspires to me :  
At my forbidding frown his heart must ache,  
His tongue must falter, and his frame must shake ;  
And if I grant him at my feet to kneel,  
What trembling fearful pleasure must he feel :  
Nay, such the raptures that my smiles inspire,  
That reason's self must for a time retire.’ ”

‘ Alas ! my good Josiah,’ said the dame,  
 ‘ These wicked thoughts would fill his soul with shame ;  
 He kneel and tremble at a thing of dust !  
 He cannot, child : ’—the child replied, ‘ He must.’ ”

Were an office to be opened for the insurance of literary reputations, no critic at all likely to be in the society’s service would refuse the life of a poet who could write like Crabbe. Cardinal Newman, Mr. Leslie Stephen, Mr. Swinburne, are not always of the same way of thinking, but all three hold the one true faith about Crabbe.

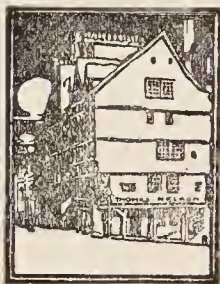
But even were Crabbe now left unread, which is very far from being the case, his would be an enviable fame—for was he not one of the favourite poets of Walter Scott, and whenever the closing scene of the great magician’s life is read in the pages of Lockhart, must not Crabbe’s name be brought upon the reader’s quivering lip ?

To soothe the sorrow of the soothers of sorrow, to bring tears to the eyes and smiles to the cheeks of the lords of human smiles and tears, is no mean ministry.

THE END.

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